




THE LITTLE RUNAWAYS

ALICE TURNER CURTIS

A yellow-toned illustration of a woman with a bow in her hair, sitting in a wicker chair and reading a book. She is surrounded by flowering branches, possibly cherry blossoms. The scene is set outdoors in a garden.


Mrs. Carl R Goetz
124 Miramonte Road
Walnut Creek Calif.
94596

please return

To Susan
Gunn

Walden
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"For the land's sake !" said Mrs. Burton

The Little Runaways

By

Alice Turner Curtis

Author of "Marjorie's Way" etc.

Illustrated by Ruth Rollins



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The Little Runaways

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CHAPTER I

CATHIE'S ARRIVAL

MRS. BURTON sat down by the east window, which faced the road leading to the village, and leaned back in her comfortable rocking-chair with a sigh of content.

"Soap-making is a dreadful job," she said aloud, although there was no one to respond to the remark. "I declare it is," she continued, after a moment's silence, "my ashes didn't seem as good as common this year. The way that lye acts I shouldn't say there was a bit of strength to it." She swayed back and forth leisurely and turned an appreciative eye toward a crab-apple tree near the window, now covered with fragrant pink blossoms.

"I ought to have 'tended to that soap six weeks ago," she said, "and if I lived where neighbors had an eye on me I s'pose I should have had it all settled before this warm spell came on. Tending the fire is

dreadful trying this weather. It needs younger knees than mine to be snooping around after chips and peering into the kettle. There are times," she continued, "when I wish that the Higgins family had turned out differently. Amanda was the only one I ever could like, and I never knew what became of her. If there had been a likely boy in the family I would have adopted him, being as the Higginses are my nearest relatives. Now I wonder what child that is."

Out on the dusty road a small figure was approaching. It was a little girl in a blue-checked gingham dress. She carried an umbrella and walked briskly, although she had already journeyed for several miles on foot, and the day was warm.

Back of Mrs. Burton's house on the slope of a hill was the apple orchard, and as the small traveler neared the cottage a backward tilt of her umbrella allowed her to see the flowering mass of blossoms.

"My!" she said, stopping to get a better look at them, "ain't that hill pretty. And that brown house set right down under it. I guess I'll stop there."

Mrs. Burton was still watching the small figure, had noticed the tilt of the umbrella and the brief stop, and was now leaning out of the window to get a better look at the child.

"Little girl," she called, finally, waving her apron out of the window to attract her attention, "little girl, it's dreadful warm, don't you want a drink?"

At the sound of Mrs. Burton's voice the child halted, and set her bundle on the ground, furred the good-sized umbrella, and then picking up the bundle came toward the front door.

"Go 'round to the side door," called Mrs. Burton, in a reproving tone. The girl nodded and turned her steps toward the side door, which opened into the kitchen.

"Well," said Mrs. Burton, with a smile, as she met her visitor at the door, "you have chosen a warm day for your journey." The girl smiled back and said, "Yes'm."

"Come right in out of the heat," continued the good lady; and she noticed that the child wiped her feet carefully on the rush mat outside the kitchen door.

"Were you going far?" asked Mrs. Burton, after her guest was seated in the cool living-room and was happily engaged with a plate of cookies and a glass of milk.

"I was coming here," replied the girl, taking a good-sized bite from a fat cooky, and turning an anxious eye toward the umbrella and bundle which rested upon a chair near the door.

"For the land's sake!" said Mrs. Burton.

Her visitor apparently did not notice this exclamation, and kept on with the cookies. Even in her surprise Mrs. Burton noticed that the child did not drop any crumbs on the carpet, holding her knees upward in a most uncomfortable position that her scant checked gingham skirt might catch every crumb.

"What were you coming here for?"

"Didn't you expect me?" asked her visitor, turning a smiling look toward her hostess.

"No, indeed," answered Mrs. Burton, "I never saw you before in my life. I don't even know your name."

"No, ma'am."

"Well, what is your name? I hope you ain't a Higgins!" said Mrs. Burton, in sudden dread lest one of the much despised family of cousins had appeared before her.

"No, ma'am," replied the girl.

"Well, what is your name, and who are you, and where are you going?"

The little girl had finished her milk and cookies. She set the glass and plate upon a stand near her chair, and then carefully gathering up her skirt, said: "I'll just step to the door and shake these crumbs out."

"For the land's sake!" said Mrs. Burton.

In a moment the little girl was back, and had seated herself again. This time she smoothed her hair carefully back from her forehead, folded her hands in her checked gingham lap, and said, "I was eight years old yesterday. My name is Catherine Berry, and I have come to live with you."

She smiled upon Mrs. Burton, as if she had just made the most delightful announcement possible; and, as that good woman did not at once respond, she continued:

"In my bundle I have another dress just like this, two nightgowns, and three handkerchiefs, and the umbrella is mine, so you won't have to buy anything for me."

There was another pause and Catherine, thinking that Mrs. Burton's surprised look might be accounted for by the fact that she, Catherine, had arrived bare-headed, again spoke.

"I didn't like my hat, so I left it."

Mrs. Burton leaned so far back in her rocking-chair that she nearly tipped it over backward. She and the chair regained their balance with a visible effort.

"Where did you come from?" she asked steadily.

"From Boston."

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"For the land's sake. Boston is a good seventy miles from here."

"I had a ticket," nodded Catherine, with her ready smile.

"Where to?"

"To Cumberland Junction."

"That's five miles from here."

Catherine nodded again.

"Who gave you the ticket?" continued Mrs. Burton anxiously.

"I found it."

"Found a railroad ticket!"

"Yes'm. I found it on the sidewalk the day we was took to Franklin Park for a picnic; and Josie Smith told me what it was. She's a big girl, most twelve. And she said if I was to go to the Northern Station in Boston and get on a train that in about two hours I'd get to Cumberland Junction."

"Did she tell you about me?" asked Mrs. Burton.

"Yes'm."

"Well, I never!"

"She didn't tell me exactly about you," explained Catherine, "but she said to get out of the train at Cumberland Junction, and walk along till I came to a nice-looking place with flowers and trees, and where

there was a nice-looking woman, and then to go right in and stay."

"But you came past a dozen houses between here and the Junction!" objected Mrs. Burton.

"I didn't see any I liked," smiled Catherine.

"Where's your father and mother?" continued Mrs. Burton.

"I'm a norphan," replied the little girl.

"There!" said Mrs. Burton, "I was sure of it! And you've run away from an asylum in Boston!"

"Yes'm," replied Catherine.

"Well, you'll have to go straight back!"

Catherine turned a surprised look upon her hostess.

"They don't want me!" she said, "they have been trying to get somebody to take me ever since I was little. Josie Smith was took last week, and having the ticket I thought I could find a place."

"You'll have to go straight back," repeated Mrs. Burton firmly.

Catherine slid off the chair and walked toward her bundle and umbrella.

"I'm much obliged for the cookies," she said.

"You're welcome," responded Mrs. Burton.

"Perhaps you've got a little girl already?" said Catherine, looking toward Mrs. Burton.

"No," said Mrs. Burton.

"Then I s'pose I don't suit," said the child.

"How are you going to get back to Boston? Pity's sake, I forgot that you haven't any ticket. Sit down, Catherine. I'll have to think how to get you back to Boston. Didn't you know that it was wrong to run away? Come here, child," for Mrs. Burton's heart had softened at the sight of the little figure ready to take up the bundle and start out.

Catherine went close up to the rocking-chair and leaned against its broad arm and smiled up at Mrs. Burton.

"Have you any little boy?" she asked.

"No," said Mrs. Burton.

"P'raps you'd rather take a little boy. There's some nice little boys at the 'sylum. Phinny Trot is a real nice little boy."

Almost unconsciously Mrs. Burton's hand went out and smoothed back the reddish brown hair from the child's forehead.

"What makes you think I want a little boy or a little girl either?" asked Mrs. Burton, slipping her arm around the little figure and drawing it into her lap.

The child cuddled down with a little sigh of content.

"Once a lady held me like this," she said slowly ; "she thought she'd adopt me and she took me home and I stayed all night, and she rocked me to sleep."

"Why didn't she adopt you?" questioned Mrs. Burton.

"Her husband didn't want any little girl!"

"Humph," said Mrs. Burton.

"Have you a husband?" questioned Catherine.

"No," said Mrs. Burton.

"Then I s'pose you don't want a little girl like me."

Mrs. Burton made no answer, but rocked smoothly back and forth. Her thoughts were busy. Boston was a large city. How was she to find the asylum from which Catherine had wandered?

"I'll have to go to Boston with her myself, I suppose," she reflected, "and that soap only half made."

As she rocked and thought, almost unconsciously, Mrs. Burton was humming an old-time nursery-rhyme. "Hush, my child, lie still and slumber," and looking down at the little figure in her arms she saw the eyes close, and in a moment Catherine was asleep.

"Poor little thing, walking way over from the Junction. I expect she'd be a sight of company, and not much trouble either, judging from her careful ways

about crumbs. I don't see how I can journey up to Boston with that soap just as it is! I might write to the city missionary about her. There! That's just what I will do. I've had correspondence with him at Thanksgiving time, and he'll know just what asylum has lost a child. I'll write to-night and have the Jones boy mail it, and tell those asylum folks to send somebody right down here after Catherine. 'Holy angels guard thy bed ——' " and Mrs. Burton looked again at the flushed little face resting against her arm.

The long afternoon was nearly over before Catherine awoke. It was then too late, Mrs. Burton decided, to send a letter that night; so Catherine was told that she was to stay all night, and the child trotted after her about the kitchen while Mrs. Burton prepared supper, telling about the big kitchen at the 'sylum; and about Phinny Trot. As they sat down at the small round table Catherine looked across at Mrs. Burton and said:

"As you haven't any little girl or any little boy, and as I shall have to live in the 'sylum always, after you send me back to-morrow, let's you and me just play that you are my mother to-night! I'll say, 'mother, can I have some more jelly?' and you'll say, 'yes, dear,' just like a truly mother. Will you?"

Mrs. Burton smiled. "Why, I don't care," she said, "only after supper I shall say, 'Now, my little girl must go to bed good and early, because she has had a long walk to-day,' and then you must say, 'yes, mother.'"

Catherine drew her shoulders forward and nodded her head with delight.

"Yes," she said, "and let's forget all about my going back till to-morrow comes. Just as if I was really going to stay."

When the time came for Catherine to go up-stairs to bed she took the bundle and umbrella with her. "Josie Smith gave me this nice umbrella," she said, looking admiringly at the somewhat dilapidated and faded cover.

Mrs. Burton helped the child prepare for bed, opened the windows which faced toward the blossomy orchard, and said good-night. Catherine's little hand grasped at her apron as the good woman gave her a good-night kiss. "I wish I was the kind of a little girl you wanted," she said.

Mrs. Burton kissed her again, and went thoughtfully down-stairs to her seat in the comfortable rocking-chair near the Eastern window. "Now if one of the Higgins children had been like that

I—well, I don't know," she said to herself. "‘Just like a truly mother.’ Bless her heart." And Mrs. Burton wiped her eyes hastily on her apron.

CHAPTER II

A VISIT TO MISS PITTS

"I DON'T see how I can afford to take her," thought Mrs. Burton, "but there, I don't know as it takes any great amount of wealth to bring up a child. I guess she'd be full as happy as if I sent her back. I've got an excellent garden under way, and if we have any hay crop at all I shall have enough to pay my taxes and ready money on hand. Land, that child wouldn't make me a bit the poorer, and I believe I should take comfort with her.

"There's nobody to say aye, yes, or no, to anything I want to do," continued Mrs. Burton, "and she'd be somebody to talk to. I get dreadful tired of hearing my own voice and nobody answering back. I've a great mind to let her stay a spell, anyway. I can write to the city missionary all about it, how she came here and all, and say that I have decided to keep her through the warm weather, and when fall comes we'll see!"

So Mrs. Burton wrote the letter, and when the

Jones boy came by the next morning she gave it to him to mail.

When Catherine awoke it was just daylight. The first sound she heard was a drowsy twitter of birds, that nested in an elm tree whose branches came near the windows. As she lay thinking about the birds, she began to sniff at the fragrance of the apple blossoms that came in at the open windows. Then she sat up in bed and looked about the room. The floor was painted yellow. Between the windows was a light stand covered with a white linen square. In front of the stand was a braided rug. In the corner of the room stood a high chest of drawers. There was a white linen cover on the top of this, and another braided rug in front of it. Opposite the bed stood two straight-backed chairs with rush bottoms, and a long, narrow rug covered the floor in front of the bed. Catherine looked about the room approvingly. "My," she said to herself, and then sliding quietly out of the bed she tiptoed to the window and looked out. The apple trees looked to her like huge bouquets. She drew in a long breath of the fragrant air, and then crept softly back to bed, to wait until she was called.

"When I first woke up," she murmured in a whisper-

ing tone, "I thought for a moment I was really 'dopted. I wish I was. Just think, if I was going to sleep in this lovely room every night, and call the lady 'mother.' I guess Phinny Trot would like to live here. I guess the lady don't want any little boy or any little girl either. But I'm glad I came. I can remember about this nice room, and about the apple blossoms, and I'm most sure there is a kitty in this house!"

It seemed a long time to Catherine before she heard a step on the stairs. Mrs. Burton had a bright tin basin in one hand and a pitcher in the other. Over her arm hung a long towel with a blue border. She set the basin and pitcher on the little stand, and then took a cake of brown soap from the pocket of her apron.

"Spring right up," she said with a smiling nod at Catherine. "I was so surprised to see you last night that I didn't think about your bath. So now here is plenty of water and soap and you give yourself a good scrubbing while I step down-stairs and bring up a comb. You didn't think to bring a tooth-brush, I suppose."

"No, ma'am," said Catherine.

"Well, we'll go to the village to-day and get you one."

"Am I going to stay another night?" asked Catherine eagerly.

"Why, yes. I thought perhaps you'd like to stay all summer, that is if the asylum folks were willing; I've sent a letter to find out."

Catherine drew her shoulders forward and clasped her hands. "Oh," she said, "they will be willing. They have wanted somebody to take me for years and years. That's one reason I was glad to find the ticket. They want Phinny Trot too," she concluded.

Mrs. Burton handed her the brown cake of soap, but made no reply.

While Catherine was lacing her shoes she saw her chamber door move slightly, and in came a big white cat.

"Oh, kitty!" said Catherine under her breath, and waited hopefully. The big cat looked about the room, and then walked slowly over to the little girl and rubbed its handsome head against her arm, looking up at her with its friendly yellow eyes. Catherine stroked it gently, and the cat purred appreciatively. The little girl forgot about her shoes, about the comb and brush, and that Mrs. Burton was waiting for her.

At the asylum a long, lean, frightened cat had ap-

peared from time to time in the yard, but never before had Catherine stroked a cat, or even seen one as beautiful as this dainty creature who was so ready to be friendly.

"A kitty!" she said to herself, "an all white, clean, fat kitty," and she sighed with pleasure. "And I am to stay all summer!" she reflected happily.

Just then Mrs. Burton appeared at the doorway.

"Well," she said, "so Princess has found out that there is a little girl in the house."

"Oh, is her name Princess?"

"Yes."

"But I thought princesses were always fairies?" said Catherine.

"Not when they are nice white cats," said Mrs. Burton; "but seems to me I heard a story, a fairy story, of course, a long time ago about a beautiful white cat which was really a princess!"

"Oh, tell me about it!" said Catherine, scrambling to her feet and lifting the white cat in her arms. So Mrs. Burton sat down on the side of the bed, with Catherine and Princess close beside her, and told the story of a bad fairy who waved its wand over a beautiful princess and changed her into a white cat. But the cat was so beautiful that the queen, the mother of

the princess, always kept it with her, and one day a good fairy came along and changed the cat back to a beautiful princess again. "And your hair isn't combed, and your shoes are not tied, and we haven't had breakfast, and we've got to make soap," concluded Mrs. Burton.

In a few moments they were down-stairs and ready for breakfast, with Princess curled up in a sunny window.

"Are we going to pretend to-day?" asked Catherine, looking at Mrs. Burton wistfully.

"Why, I guess we might as well," responded Mrs. Burton smilingly; "you see I'm going to make soap to-day. I had my lye-barrel all set yesterday, and to-day I shall have to keep a little fire going under the big soap-kettle out in the yard, and if I had a little girl of my own I should certainly have her pick up chips around the old wood-pile for me. Of course I wouldn't ask a little girl who was visiting me to do it, but my own little girl I should set about it right after breakfast. Now, I will give you your choice; you can be a visitor and do as you please, or you can pretend to be my little girl and do as I tell you."

Catherine's shoulders came forward again, and she

bounced up and down in her chair. "Oh, let's pretend,—mother!" she said.

"Very well, my child," said Mrs. Burton, "I will just clear away the breakfast things and you can take that basket on the back porch and step out to the wood-pile and pick up chips. Don't go near the lye-barrel!"

Catherine got the basket and, followed by Princess, started out. All the morning Mrs. Burton and Catherine were busy about the soap. The little girl had never seen soft soap made before, and thought it a very wonderful proceeding.

In the afternoon Mrs. Burton put on a fresh cotton dress, and Catherine put on the clean gingham she had brought in the bundle, and they started to walk to the village, which was nearly a mile from Mrs. Burton's house.

"Shall I take my umbrella?" asked Catherine.

"No, I guess you may take my little brown sunshade," said Mrs. Burton thoughtfully, "you'll have to have a hat of some kind."

So they set out. Catherine held the brown shade very carefully and kept close to Mrs. Burton's side.

"You will have to have a hat, and a tooth-brush, and some low shoes, and stockings," said Mrs. Burton

as they walked along, "and while I'm about it I might as well get some white cloth for underclothes, and some sort of muslin to make you a Sunday dress."

"Yes—mother!" responded Catherine, "that's what truly mothers do for little girls; isn't it? Are you just pretending to buy all those things for me, or are you really going to buy them?"

"I am really going to buy them. I have the money right in my pocket," replied Mrs. Burton. "Now what kind of a Sunday dress would you like to have?"

"Oh," said Catherine, almost forgetting to keep the brown sunshade directly over her head, "I should like to have a blue dress, with ruffles on it and lace all around the neck."

"Well," said Mrs. Burton with a smiling glance at the brown hair and the little girl's shining blue eyes, "I think that will be real pretty for you, and if our money holds out that's just what you shall have."

The village storekeeper seemed much surprised to see a little girl with Mrs. Burton, and when Catherine called her "mother," he opened his eyes very wide; but he was too polite to ask any questions, and measured off the blue muslin for the dress, and the fine white cloth for the underclothes, without saying

a word. Then he fitted Catherine with some shiny low shoes, and Mrs. Burton picked out some thin black stockings.

"I guess I'll get some pink calico, too; I think you ought to have another cotton dress," said Mrs. Burton, looking disapprovingly at Catherine's scant blue-checked gingham.

The milliner, Miss Pitts, was an old friend of Mrs. Burton's, so Catherine was left alone a few minutes while the two friends stepped back into Miss Pitts' workroom, where Mrs. Burton told her all about Catherine, and that she was going to have her stay through the summer, unless the asylum folks took her away.

"What makes you spend any money on the child until you find out if the asylum folks are willing to let her stay?" asked Miss Pitts. She had left the door ajar, and Catherine, who, for the first time in her life, was experiencing the delight of buying pretty things, and whose thoughts were full of Princess and of a new blue muslin dress, heard her, and forgot all the joy of pretending. She listened eagerly to hear Mrs. Burton's answer.

"Land, if I hadn't forgotten all about the asylum having a word to say about it, Eliza," she said.

"The child seemed to think they didn't want her, and I've been buying shoes and things for her already." Just then the sound of sobs from the front room interrupted them, and they both hastened out to see what was the matter.

"Why, Catherine," said Mrs. Burton, "what are you crying about?"

"Oh, I heard the lady say perhaps I'd have to go back to the 'sylum," sobbed the child; "there isn't any kitty there, and there isn't any mother or pretty trees or anything. And nobody wants to 'dopt me."

The milliner and Mrs. Burton exchanged a look of sympathy. "I tell you what," said the milliner, "if you don't keep her, Mrs. Burton, I shall." At this Catherine looked up and a little smile crept over her face. Miss Pitts leaned over and wiped away the tears.

"Wouldn't you — rather — take — a nice — little boy?" half-sobbed Catherine. "Phinny Trot wants to be took."

"There!" said Mrs. Burton, "you see she's sort of settled on staying with me, haven't you, dear?"

"Yes'm," said Catherine, but turned an anxious look toward Miss Pitts. "Would you like to 'dopt Phinny?" she questioned.

"A boy?" Miss Pitts' voice expressed alarm; "no indeed! I don't want to adopt anybody; but I don't want you to go back to the asylum, my dear, and I spoke right out."

"She isn't going back to the asylum, at least not this summer!" said Mrs. Burton firmly, "so we'll begin 'pretending' again, Catherine, and we want to look at hats, Eliza. We want a pretty hat to wear with a blue muslin dress, don't we, Catherine?"

"Yes'm," said Catherine.

A fine white straw with a wreath of small blue flowers was decided upon.

"Now," said Miss Pitts, "I am going to make Catherine a present of an every-day hat," and she tried on a broad-rimmed leghorn hat trimmed with lovely white ribbon.

"Isn't that most too pretty for every-day wear?" questioned Mrs. Burton.

"Not a bit!" replied Miss Pitts. "If I had a little girl, this is the kind of hat I should have her wear every day."

For a moment Catherine thought she could pretend Miss Pitts was her truly mother, but she remembered Princess, and then, looking at Mrs. Burton's kind face, she was sure that she would much rather be Mrs.

Burton's little girl even if she never had a pretty hat.

It was a very happy little girl that trudged homeward beside Mrs. Burton. She wore the white leghorn, and carried the other hat in a paper bag; and often sent a joyful look toward the parcels which Mrs. Burton was carrying. As they turned in at the side path she saw Princess waiting for them on the porch.

"Oh, mother," she murmured, "it's all just as if I was truly 'dopted, isn't it?"

"I guess so," said Mrs. Burton smiling down on her.

CHAPTER III

PHINNY TROT

THE next day was Saturday. Princess found her way up to Catherine's room early in the morning, and jumping up on the bed said "good-morning" by rubbing her nose against the little girl's cheek.

"My," said Catherine, waking up, "I was dreaming about a kitty just like you, Princess, and I dreamed it was my kitty." Princess purred, purred as if she understood all about it, and curled down beside Catherine, holding her head up as if waiting to hear more about the dream.

"I didn't dream a word about Phinny Trot," continued Catherine in a whisper. "I most wish Phinny didn't have red hair and such dreadful light eyes. I guess he'd be took if his eyes were darker and his hair was different. I like his hair and eyes, kitty. He's a good boy; he gave me a Christmas present. Not a make-believe, but a truly present, and I've got it in my other pocket. It's a handkerchief with B on it, in blue. He bought it with five cents a man gave him."

Just then Catherine's confidences were interrupted

by the appearance of Mrs. Burton at the door with the basin and the pitcher of water. Catherine noticed that the towel over her arm this morning had a red border.

"Well," said Mrs. Burton, "here is the new tooth-brush, and here is a new brush and comb, so spring right up and get ready for breakfast."

"Yes, mother," said Catherine, carefully lifting Princess off the bed.

"You are going to be my mother all summer, aren't you?" she said, looking at Mrs. Burton.

"Why of course I am. And I guess you'll be surprised to hear that your blue muslin dress is all cut out, and that after breakfast I shall have you try it on, and I shall turn right to and finish it before I sleep to-night; and to morrow we'll go to church and you shall wear it, and your best hat, and your new shoes!"

"My!" said Catherine, her shoulders coming forward as usual when she was very much pleased. "And will the blue muslin have a ruffle?"

"Indeed it will. And lace all about the neck and on the sleeves!"

"My!" said Catherine again. Mrs. Burton went down-stairs, and Catherine practiced jumping from the long rug in front of the bed to the little round rug in

front of the stand. She pretended that the strip of yellow floor between the two rugs was a brook, and that she must jump over it. Princess seemed to think that Catherine's toes were a new kind of mice and jumped after them, and they were having such a good time that Mrs. Burton had to call Catherine twice to come to breakfast.

"Dear me," said Catherine when the second call came, "p'r'aps she won't pretend to be my mother if I play before I am dressed," so she hurried down as soon as possible, and went into the kitchen with a very sober face.

"There, sit right up to the table, dear," said Mrs. Burton smiling at the little girl.

At this Catherine's sober looks vanished, and she skipped across the room to her seat, and Mrs. Burton sat down opposite to her, while Princess walked slowly over to the sunny window and jumped up and looked out as if she had entirely forgotten every one in the room.

"I stopped to play," said Catherine, looking earnestly at Mrs. Burton.

"Did you? Well, that's right!" said Mrs. Burton comfortably. "When I was a little girl I used to play all the time, and I am the better for it now."

"Oh!" said Catherine in surprise, "did you have children to play with?"

"I had a brother, and we lived very near the sea-shore, and we had the finest chance to play that ever was. In summer there was the sand to build forts and gardens of, and the water to wade in and sail boats on; and in winter there was plenty of sliding and making snow-men!"

"Oh, tell some more," said Catherine, "it seems just as if it was Phinny Trot and I pretending."

"What did you and Phinny Trot pretend?" asked Mrs. Burton, leaning across the table to turn more cream over Catherine's oatmeal.

"Oh, we used to pretend that the same lady 'dopted us, and so we were brother and sister. And we'd pretend that the lady hadn't any husband, or anybody but just me and Phinny, and that she liked us just as well as if we were her truly children; and that she gave Phinny a sled, and gave me a doll. And we used to pretend that there was a nice kitty in her house, and a big dog. Wasn't it lucky I found that railroad ticket?" concluded Catherine, happily.

For a moment Mrs. Burton did not smile, then she looked at the thin little figure sitting opposite, and answered:

"Yes, my child, it was."

"I love to pretend things, don't you—mother?" said Catherine, as they finished their breakfast.

"Don't you like real, truly things better?" asked Mrs. Burton.

"I don't know," said Catherine slowly.

"Well, now Princess is a real, truly cat; isn't she better than just a make-believe cat?"

"Oh, yes!" said Catherine.

"And your blue muslin, and your pretty hats, don't you like those better than just pretending a dress and a pretty hat?"

"Oh, yes," said Catherine, "but what I like best about pretending is to call you 'mother.' You see I pretend just as hard as I can that you are my own truly mother, and that I'm going to stay here forever and ever!" Catherine was standing close beside Mrs. Burton, and the good woman lifted her up in her lap.

"My!" said Catherine, "I guess you are pretending too, for truly mothers like to hold their little girls, don't they?"

"Yes, and they forget that little girls have to have new muslin dresses," said Mrs. Burton.

"I can sew," said Catherine; "we had to sew thirty

minutes every morning, and thirty minutes every afternoon. I can help make my dress."

"Well, I guess I shan't need your help to-day, my dear. But I will tell you what you can do. You can take Princess and go up in the orchard, and I guess you can amuse yourself out-of-doors awhile. We'll try on the blue muslin first."

So Catherine stood very still while Mrs. Burton slipped the dress over her head, and after a minute or two she was free again and, followed by Princess, was ready to start.

"And, Catherine, if you get hungry, dear, there's a plate of cookies right on the lower pantry shelf. You run in and get one any time; eat them all if you want to."

"Yes'm," said Catherine, with a little choke in her voice.

"This is the happiest place, kitty," she said, as she picked Princess up, and went across the yard toward the fragrant, blossoming hillside.

The trees were set in rows, and the grass underneath was short and full of pink and white clover blossoms.

"Mother says to play is the best thing there is for little girls," she said to Princess, "so we will make a

playhouse. Once Josie Smith, when she had a truly mother before she come to the 'sylum, she had a play-house." And Catherine began to look about for a suitable place. One apple-tree stood a little way further up the hill than the others. It was larger, and some of its branches drooped very near the ground, and Catherine thought that would be a nice place, right between the big roots, which came up from the ground in little ridges. She found a broad, flat stone under the fence and carried it to put under the tree for a table. Then she went back to the house and brought a smooth short stick of wood from the shed for a chair. Then she made another journey to the house for a cooky, and to tell Mrs. Burton about the playhouse.

"Why, you must have some dishes!" said Mrs. Burton. "When I had a playhouse I always had dishes. My mother gave me all the broken pieces of china. Now, let me see. I have a cracked tumbler, and I nicked a piece out of a blue plate only yesterday. How will that do to begin with?"

"Lovely," said Catherine.

"Well, perhaps we may break some more pretty soon," said Mrs. Burton hopefully, as Catherine took the dishes and hurried back to the orchard.

Mrs. Burton watched the little figure cross the yard.

"I declare," she said, "it does seem as if that child was meant for me, and I'm going to keep her if I have to break in on my principal. If those asylum folks say a word about taking her away, that is, this summer, I shall give them a piece of mind. Children don't run away from places where they are happy. At least, not a girl like Catherine."

Mrs. Burton sewed busily all day. Catherine was called in several times to "try on," and before supper-time the dress was finished, with the dainty lace at the neck and sleeves, and the ruffle on the bottom.

"Is that mine to keep?" asked Catherine, as she looked at it.

"Why, of course!"

"Oh," said Catherine, "and when I go back to the 'sylum will I take that dress and both hats, and ——"

"There, there," interrupted Mrs. Burton, "this isn't any way to make believe. I have just made my little Cathie a muslin dress, and all she has to think about is just to enjoy wearing it."

"My!" said Catherine, "and will you always call me Cathie, mother?"

"Why, yes, I guess so," replied Mrs. Burton. "Now

what would you like for supper? Princess likes creamed fish and baked potatoes, and with a hot johnny-cake and some first-class apple jelly I guess we can make out."

Catherine skipped joyfully toward the kitchen. "Oh," she said, "isn't this the bestest place?"

CHAPTER IV

CATHIE WINS

MONDAY morning brought the matron of the asylum to see about Catherine. When the depot carriage stopped in front of Mrs. Burton's house and a tall, thin woman stepped out, Mrs. Burton said aloud: "Just as I supposed, a cut-and-dried old maid;" and she was surprised to see Catherine rush toward the visitor exclaiming:

"Oh, Miss Gilman, dear Miss Gilman, see what a nice place I have found to live."

And when Mrs. Burton saw Miss Gilman stoop and kiss the little girl, she was more surprised than ever. "That does beat all," she exclaimed, for she had fully made up her mind that every one connected with a children's asylum must be stern, and not at all like the pleasant-faced woman whom Catherine was leading toward the house.

Mrs. Burton met them at the door, and told Catherine she could play in the yard with Princess until she called her, and invited Miss Gilman to come in.

It did not take long for the matron to tell of the

little girl's disappearance, and Mrs. Burton told of Catherine's arrival at the cottage.

"Do you wish to adopt her?" asked Miss Gilman. "We should be only too glad to know that she had found such a good home!"

"I declare," said Mrs. Burton, "I can't say this minute what I will do, but the child can stay right here with me this summer, and then we'll see."

"That is very kind of you," replied Miss Gilman, "and there is only one objection. Two years ago a lady took Catherine home intending to adopt her, but her husband did not approve of the idea. Since then Mr. Damon has changed his mind, and the very day Catherine ran away they came after her. Now, you see how it is. The Damons are people in good circumstances; they will take Catherine and give her a good education and a comfortable home. But, as she is here and happy, you shall have the first choice."

Mrs. Burton stopped rocking and looked out the window. She could see Catherine under the lilac bushes making a wreath of leaves and blossoms for Princess' neck.

There was a moment's silence. Mrs. Burton remembered that she could not do very much for the child except give her a happy home.

"Are those Damons well off?" she asked.

"Yes, Mrs. Burton, they are in prosperous circumstances. They have a beautiful home in Worcester, and are well spoken of by people who know them."

Mrs. Burton sighed. "Well," she said, "I haven't any business to stand in the child's way. Dear knows, I never should have thought of such a thing as going after a little girl to fetch up; but Cathie walked right in and I took to her right away, and so did Princess. Well," and Mrs. Burton sighed again, "I guess it's the best thing for the Damons to have her. Did you want to take her back with you to-day?"

"Yes, I had planned to do so," replied Miss Gilman. "A child is a good deal of care, Mrs. Burton," she continued.

"Maybe so," responded her hostess, looking out the window again. "You call her in, Miss Gilman, and tell her, while I step up-stairs and gather up her things. I made her a dress Saturday and got her a hat. You just speak to her," and Mrs. Burton made her way toward the entry.

"Catherine," called Miss Gilman, from the open window.

"Yes'm," responded the little girl running toward

the house, the partly-finished wreath in her hand, and the white cat bounding along beside her.

"Oh, Miss Gilman," she said as she came into the room, "did Phinny Trot care because I came away?"

"Indeed he did," answered Miss Gilman.

"And nobody has wanted to 'dopt Phinny since I came away?"

"No," said Miss Gilman. "Catherine, do you remember the lady who took you home with her once, and had you stay all night?"

"And took me back to the 'sylum because her husband didn't like little girls?" said Catherine. "Yes'm, I remember her. She rocked me to sleep."

"Yes," said Miss Gilman. "Well, the day you were naughty and ran away, that lady came to see you. She came to take you home with her."

"To 'dopt me?"

"Yes. To have you live with her always as her own little girl."

"My! Wasn't it lucky I came away that day," said Catherine; and as Miss Gilman did not reply for a moment, she continued, "because this is just the happiest place to live. Phinny and I always pretended there were places like this, and Mrs. Burton pretends

to be my mother, and sometimes it most seems as if I was her truly little girl."

"You will be Mrs. Damon's 'truly little girl,' Catherine. Mrs. Burton does not want to adopt you. She thinks you will be happier to go back with me, and Mrs. Damon will come after you, in a day or two."

Catherine's smile faded. She looked down at the white cat, which was rubbing against her legs. Then she looked about the pleasant room.

"Where is she?" she asked.

"Mrs. Burton is up-stairs packing up your things," answered Miss Gilman.

Just then the driver of the depot carriage called to his passenger: "Say, ma'am, if you're calculatin' on catching the eleven-twenty-seven you'll have to be startin' pretty soon."

Mrs. Burton's steps could be heard coming down the stairs, and in a moment she entered the room with a neat package in one hand and Catherine's leghorn hat with the white ribbon bow, in the other.

"There, Cathie," she said, "all your things are in this parcel, and here's your pretty hat," and she slipped the white elastic under the little girl's chin.

Catherine looked up at her wistfully. "I s'pose you don't want to 'dopt a little boy, neither, do you?"

she said. "Phinny's a real good boy, and Phinny wants to be took."

"No, dear," said Mrs. Burton, a little huskily, "I ain't well situated to adopt a child; if I was I should hold tight to you."

Catherine picked up Princess.

"Come, Catherine, thank Mrs. Burton for her kindness to you, and say good-bye. We must take that next train."

The little girl put the white cat gently down. "Oh!" she said, almost inaudibly, "oh, mother. I wish't we was goin' to pretend forever and ever," and she reached out her arms toward Mrs. Burton, who clasped the child and kissed her.

Catherine clung to her, and Mrs. Burton felt the tears on the little girl's cheeks.

"Thank you, Mrs. Burton," said Miss Gilman, taking hold of Catherine's arm and drawing her gently away, "you have been more than kind to one of our little ones." But Mrs. Burton made no response, and Catherine, with one arm over her eyes, was drawn down the path and helped into the wagon. Princess followed as far as the gate, where she stopped and watched the passengers take their seats.

Just then Catherine remembered her cherished

umbrella, and leaned out. "Oh, mother, I've forgot my nice umbrella, but I don't want it; I'll leave it for a present for you—mother."

"Land!" Mrs. Burton ran down the path with surprising quickness. "Wait, wait a minute. I'm going to take her. I'll adopt her right off. Don't start up your horse, Ambrose, that's my little girl, and I want her."

"Get right out, Cathie," she said taking hold of the wagon as if she expected it to go unless she prevented. "Now Miss Gilman, you'll think I'm dreadful changeable-minded, but I've been 'pretending,' as Cathie says, that she's my little girl, and I declare to it I can't bear to stop. I guess I can make her happy."

Catherine had sprung out of the wagon, and was clinging eagerly to Mrs. Burton's arms.

"Oh, Miss Gilman," she pleaded, noticing a disappointed expression on the matron's face, "mother says it's good for little girls to play. I don't want to live with the man who didn't want any little girl."

The matron got slowly out of the carriage. "Well, I don't know, I'm sure," she said.

"Now, come right in," urged Mrs. Burton, "and let's talk it all over. You ought to have a good substantial lunch, and Ambrose can come over and fetch



RUTH
HOLLINS

"Get right out, Cathie," she said

you for the two-twenty-one train, can't you, Ambrose?"

"Well," said the driver, "I shall have to charge a quarter extra if I do; I've been a waitin' here some time."

"I'll pay the quarter, Ambrose. Now, Miss Gilman, you step right in, and Cathie and I will see what we can offer you. There's a part of the cold boiled dish we had yesterday, and a fresh custard pie. Cathie, you take that parcel right up-stairs and take off your hat."

"Am I your truly girl now, mother?" asked the child anxiously.

"You are just as much my truly girl as anybody's," replied Mrs. Burton firmly, "and this is your house, and Princess is your cat, and I am your mother."

"My!" said Catherine, with a gay little skip, as she hurried away up-stairs with Princess close at her heels.

CHAPTER V

MAKING A "DINAH"

"WHEN I was a little girl," said Mrs. Burton, as she spread a piece of stout black cambric out on the table and began to make marks on it with white chalk, "I had a doll named 'Dinah.'"

Catherine stood close by the table and listened eagerly. "She was a good-sized doll," continued Mrs. Burton, "and she was made of black cambric, and stuffed with cotton; she had joints at her knees and shoulders. Her hair was made out of ravelings from a black yarn stocking, her eyes were black beads, and her nose and mouth were marked with red yarn."

"My," said Catherine, watching Mrs. Burton's chalk-marks on the black cambric.

"She had real stockings, and shoes made from old gloves. Her dresses buttoned up in the back, and she had a cape and hood made of scarlet cloth."

Mrs. Burton laid down the chalk and picked up her scissors. There was a big "Dinah" all marked out on the black cambric.

"Now," continued Mrs. Burton, "I had so much

happiness with my Dinah that I am going to make one for my little girl, just as much like her as I can."

"For me!"

"Yes. It will take me quite a while to finish it and get the clothes ready. Do you suppose you could walk to the village and do an errand for me this morning?"

"Oh, yes, indeed," said Cathie.

It was a month after Miss Gilman's visit, and Cathie's cheeks were red, her nose was covered with freckles, and the thin little legs were already growing stout. She wore a blue linen dress trimmed with white braid. When she smiled you could see little dimples come and go in her cheeks and about her mouth, and as Mrs. Burton looked down at her she thought there never was such a dear child as Catherine.

"I want you to go in to Miss Pitts, and ask her if she has any good-sized black beads. You tell her what I am doing, and she'll understand the kind I want. And you tell her to send me two knots of red worsted, and a skein of stout black linen thread. I'll give you twenty cents to pay for the things."

"Shall I wear my leghorn hat?" asked Cathie.

"Yes," nodded Mrs. Burton, as she stooped over

and kissed the little girl, and then went to the door to watch Cathie go down the path.

When she reached the gate Cathie looked back and waved her hand to Mrs. Burton, who stood in the doorway with Princess close beside her.

"My mother and my kitty," whispered Cathie to herself, and then walked along the grassy path which led to the village, thinking about the wonderful doll that was soon to be her own.

Miss Pitts came to the door to meet her. "How nice you look, dear," she said; "did you walk way over here this warm morning just to see your Aunt Eliza?"

"No, ma'am," replied Catherine, "mother sent me on an errand," and then she told Miss Pitts about Dinah.

"There, now, why didn't Mrs. Burton let me do that," said Miss Pitts. "I should love to make a rag doll, and I could make it in half the time she could."

"This isn't a rag doll," said Catherine smilingly. "This is a Dinah. And when mother was little, a good deal smaller than I am, she had one, and mine is going to be just like it."

"Well, now we must see about Dinah's eyes," said Miss Pitts, and she stepped behind the counter and

took down a big white pasteboard box marked "BEADS" in big letters. "Just pull that stool up to the counter," she said, "and we'll look this box over."

Cathie pulled the high wooden stool near the counter and climbed up and sat down in front of the big box, and Miss Pitts took off the cover.

"My," said Catherine, clasping her hands in delight; for there before her shone and glistened beads of every color and shape. The big box was divided into long, narrow boxes, and each one of them held beads of different colors and sizes. There were big round light blue beads, and tiny, shiny dark blue beads. There were beads as green as the grass and as glistening as dew. There were white crystal-like beads, there were red beads and purple beads, and in a division of the big box were assorted sizes of black beads.

Miss Pitts smiled at the little girl's delight. "Now," said she, "just take off your hat, Catherine, and look the beads over. Take them up if you want to, but be sure and put them back where they belong; and while you are looking at them I'll step up-stairs a minute."

Miss Pitts lived in the rooms over her milliner's shop, and kept house for herself.

Catherine could hardly spare the time to take off her hat before touching all the beautiful, shining beads.

Most of them were strung on threads, and tied in bunches, and she picked them up and laid the strings out on the counter, a string of the crystal white beads, then the light blue beads, and the star-like tiny red beads.

"I didn't know there were beads before," she whispered to herself, as the shining strands slipped through her fingers. "I guess I'll make a picture of them. I'll have the green for a field, and I'll put these white silvery beads across it for a brook; and way up here I'll put all these light blue beads for a sky. There!" and Catherine surveyed her bead picture happily. Just then Miss Pitts came into the room. She carried a shining black tray which she put down on the counter beside the box of beads. On the tray was a glass of creamy looking milk, and a plate of sugar cookies.

"Little girls like cookies, don't they?" asked Miss Pitts.

"Oh, yes," said Catherine.

"Well, those are for you."

Catherine soon finished her lunch, and told Miss Pitts about the bead pictures.

"I guess I must be going now," she said, and began putting the beads back in their proper places.

Miss Pitts looked under the counter and found a small pink box with the picture of a church on it. She put the box in front of the little girl and said, "Now you pick out the beads you like best, enough to fill that box, and you can have them for your very own to take home."

"My," said Catherine.

"Are you going to make Dinah's clothes?" asked Miss Pitts, as Cathie began putting the white and green and blue beads in the little box.

"No, ma'am, I guess not," said Cathie.

"Don't you know how to sew?"

"Yes'm, over-and-over, and to run, and to hem. Every day at the 'sylum I sewed half an hour in the morning and half an hour in the afternoon."

"An excellent plan," said Miss Pitts approvingly; "doesn't your mother have you sew every day now?"

"No, ma'am. I guess she don't want me to do anything I did when I was a 'sylum child," said Cathie; "she says I must forget all about 'sylums; and I do, some days; all 'cept Phinny."

"That was a boy, wasn't it?"

"Yes'm. Mother says I mustn't ask folks to 'dopt Phinny any more. The minister didn't like it. He's

got a big house, you know, and he hasn't any little boy, and I told him about Phinny."

"And he didn't like it?"

"Mother said he didn't. She said ministers always knew their duty, and it wasn't for little girls to point it out. I s'pose you don't want ——"

Miss Pitts shook her head firmly. "But you ought to learn to sew, Cathie, and to knit. What are you going to do for clothes when you grow up if you can't sew? And what will you do for amusement when you get to be an old lady if you can't knit?"

Cathie looked sober; she had almost forgotten the box of beautiful beads.

"You get your mother to let you help make Dinah's clothes, and the next time you come over here I'll have a garter all started and teach you to knit."

"Yes'm," said Cathie, taking up the two small parcels Miss Pitts handed her; "thank you very much for the beads and for the cookies."

"Come again," said Miss Pitts, and the little girl started on her walk home. She began to think of how lovely it would be to have a truly Dinah of her own, and she clasped the box of shining beads closely and gave a few little skips as she walked along.

Miss Pitts was watching her from the shop window.

"Bless the child," she said. "If she would only give up talking about that boy she'd be a real comfort. I haven't any place to make a home for a boy. Boys ought to be brought up on farms, where there is plenty of room for them to rampage around."

It was a warm June day, and as Cathie walked along she began to think of how warm it was in the unshaded city yard of the asylum; and to wish, more than ever, that Phinny could be adopted.

"Wouldn't he like to see mother's white chickens, and my kitty," she thought, "and he could go fishing up the brook where that Jones boy goes; and he could swing in my swing under the apple-trees. Oh, dear, Phinny ought to be took, too. All he has is just the 'sylum," and Catherine forgot all that she had to make her happy in remembering how little Phinny had.

Mrs. Burton was on the lookout for her, and Cathie showed her the lovely beads, and Mrs. Burton told her that Dinah was all ready to stuff, and that she had waited so Catherine could see it done. Dinah's head and body were cut from one piece of cloth, and Mrs. Burton began to put the cotton in, forcing it down solidly until Dinah's head became round and full, and her shoulders and body solid and

compact. Then the arms and legs were carefully filled. Now the stout black linen thread, which Catherine had brought from Miss Pitts' shop, came into use to sew the arms on to Dinah's shoulders and the legs to her body. Dinah was all ready now for her hair of the ravelings of a black stocking, for her bead eyes, and her nose and mouth of red worsted.

When she was done the little girl clasped her closely in loving arms, and rocked for a long time in a big chair, smiling but saying nothing. It did seem to Catherine just then that her cup of happiness was overflowing.

CHAPTER VI

AN UNEXPECTED VISITOR

THE next morning there was a fine, drizzling rain; Cathie and Princess went out in the wood-shed directly after breakfast, and Cathie began to build a log house with the smooth round birch-wood.

"It will make such a nice place for you, Princess," she said to the white cat. But as soon as she put Princess in out she jumped, before Cathie could get a roof on. Princess seemed to think it was some new kind of a game, and that she was put in the little enclosure just to jump out.

After a little while Cathie went into the sitting-room and found Mrs. Burton sewing on Dinah's clothes; and then the little girl remembered what Miss Pitts had said about learning to sew and knit.

"Mother, can't I sew, too?" she asked.

Mrs. Burton looked at her over her glasses and smiled.

"Do you really want to?" she asked.

"Yes, indeed, for if I don't learn to sew who will

make my clothes when I grow up?" said Catherine seriously.

"Sure enough!" said Mrs. Burton, "I hadn't thought about that. Now, if you really want to sew, I shall have to look up for you the thimble I had when I was a little girl; for you haven't a thimble to your name."

Mrs. Burton went up-stairs and opened one of the drawers in the high chest which stood in the corner of Catherine's room, and took out a square box.

"Now, what do you suppose is in this box?" she said when she came back to the sitting-room.

"Thimbles," said Catherine. Mrs. Burton opened the box. In it were two pairs of scissors in a pretty leather case, a row of spools of different colored threads, a needle-case with all sizes of needles, a little square of beeswax, a tiny emery-ball, which looked like a strawberry, and a thimble which Catherine was sure would be just a fit for her second finger.

"My!" said the little girl.

"My aunt gave me that work-box when I was just ten years old," said Mrs. Burton, "and I have kept it all these years. I guess I must have been saving it for my own little girl."

Cathie smiled back. "Your own truly little girl," she said happily.

"When I was a little girl," said Mrs. Burton, "children used to make patchwork, and I did not like to sew, and did not make my squares very neatly, and when Aunt Hetty came to visit us she told me that if I would learn to sew neatly before she came again, for she came every Thanksgiving time, she would bring me a present."

"And you did," said Cathie; "wasn't it lucky your fingers were just as big as mine?" and she fitted the thimble carefully on to her finger.

"Dear me," said Mrs. Burton, looking at Cathie, who was sitting very straight in one of the high-backed chairs, "your feet don't even touch the round, do they?"

"No, ma'am," said Cathie, "but I don't sit in chairs much, except when we have breakfasts and dinners."

"Dear me," said Mrs. Burton again, "but little girls ought to have little chairs."

"Little rocking-chairs?" suggested Catherine.

"Why, of course," said Mrs. Burton; "what have I been thinking about when my own little rocking-chair is right up-stairs in the spare-room. I'll step right up and get it."

Mrs. Burton brought down a little rocking-chair, painted black, with gilt bands on the rockers and arms. On the back of the chair was painted a bunch of red roses.

"There," said Mrs. Burton, "just see how that fits," and Catherine slid down from the high-backed chair and sat comfortably in the little rocking-chair.

"You have everything for a little girl, don't you, mother?" she said. "I guess you'd most forgot how many things you had till I came."

"I guess I had," said Mrs. Burton.

"I shall call this my sewing-chair," said Catherine, rocking back and forth. "I don't s'pose you have a little table, have you, mother?" she asked.

"Why, I declare, there is a little table," said Mrs. Burton, "and that is up-stairs, too. I'll step up and bring it down," and in a minute she was back with a little table which she set beside Catherine. The little girl set the work-box on it, and looked at it proudly. Mrs. Burton had cut out a nightgown for Dinah, and basted it carefully, and now handed it to Catherine.

"You can run up those side seams," she said. Princess curled herself up at Cathie's feet, and for a time there was silence in the pleasant room while the little girl carefully followed Mrs. Burton's instructions.

"Can you knit, mother?" she asked.

"Why, yes, indeed, I used to knit all Mr. Burton's winter stockings, and my own too. And I guess I'd better lay in some good black Saxony and take up some stockings for you."

"Then when you get to be an old lady you'll amuse yourself knitting, won't you?" said Cathie, drawing her needle laboriously in and out. "Miss Pitts said she would teach me to knit."

"I never see the beat," murmured Mrs. Burton. "What do you want to learn to knit for?"

"So I can 'muse myself when I grow into an old lady," answered Catherine, with a little sigh.

Mrs. Burton heard the sigh, and reaching down took Dinah's nightgown out of the little girl's hands, and put it on the small table.

"Now, dear, put your thimble in your work-box, and run outdoors. The rain has stopped, and if you keep out of the long grass you won't get wet."

"May I take my little rocking-chair out on the side-steps?"

"Of course you may," replied Mrs. Burton.

"And may I take my table and my box of beads out there, too?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Burton; so Cathie first

carried out the table, and then the little chair, and then took her box of beads out. "I am going to make bead pictures," she called back to Mrs. Burton.

Mrs. Burton's eyes followed her lovingly. "The best child that ever was," she said to herself; "and to think I almost let her go back to that asylum. I guess I never should have seen a happy day after it if I had, and I declare if I'm not a good sight happier now than I ever expected to be. I must step into the kitchen and make some more ginger-snaps. Cathie is a great girl for ginger-snaps.

"I don't see how I happened to forget about that little chair," continued Mrs. Burton. "I'm afraid I shan't do my duty by Catherine; I want to be a good mother to her, but I'm not sure I know just how. I suppose I ought to look up some little girls for her to play with, but there's no little girl nearer than the village," and Mrs. Burton sighed again. "If it's a good bright day to-morrow I believe I'll walk over and see Eliza Pitts and ask her what she thinks about play-mates for Cathie;" as Mrs. Burton came to this decision she turned to the window and looked down the road which led to the village.

As she looked she saw a small figure in the distance, and as it came nearer she could see that it was a boy.

He walked slowly as if tired out, and Mrs. Burton noticed that he was barefooted, and that the brim of his straw hat swung loose from the crown. She could see that his hair was red.

"My soul!" she exclaimed aloud, as she made this discovery, "I do believe it's that boy," and she hurried to the front door. The boy was now nearly opposite the house; Cathie, busily occupied on the steps at the side door, could not see him.

When the boy reached Mrs. Burton's front gate he stopped and looked anxiously toward the house. "Are you Mrs. Burton?" he asked.

"Just as I expected," murmured Mrs. Burton, but she nodded her assent to his question.

"I'll have the whole asylum here, I shouldn't wonder a mite," she continued, as the boy opened the gate and came slowly up the path. His clothes were ragged and dirty, and wet, and his face thin and tired. Mrs. Burton looked at him reproachfully.

"You have run away from the asylum!" she said.

"Yes'm," replied the boy; "they kept saying they guessed nobody ever would want to adopt me now, big as I am, and I didn't expect they would; so I thought I'd start out and try and get work. I'm past ten now."

"How did you happen to come in this direction?" asked Mrs. Burton sternly. "Did you find a ticket to Cumberland Junction?"

"No, ma'am, I walked," he answered. A discouraged look had settled over the boy's face.

"Walked from Boston?"

"Yes'm. I started two weeks ago. I kept asking the way to this place because I heard Miss Gilman tell about it, and she said Catherine was happy here."

"The land's sake," exclaimed Mrs. Burton. Just then Cathie came running around the corner of the house, followed by the white cat.

"Why, Phinny Trot," she exclaimed joyfully, and running toward him threw her arms about him and hugged him vigorously. "Oh, Phinny, have you just come? This is my truly mother," she continued, taking hold of Mrs. Burton's apron, "and this is my own kitty, and this is my house; come right in, Phinny," and before she realized what had happened Mrs. Burton was following the children through the narrow entry into the living-room.

"Sit right down on the sofa, Phinny," said Cathie, "and my mother will get you some milk and cookies, same as she did the day I came," and Cathie smiled at Mrs. Burton, as if sure of her approval. Mrs. Burton

brought the milk and cookies and some thick slices of bread and butter. The boy ate eagerly. People had been kind to him on the way, but he had often gone hungry.

"I guess you better step out to the sink and wash your face and hands," suggested Mrs. Burton. "Your toes look all stubbed up," she continued, with a glance at his feet. "You just take the tin basin full of warm water right out in the shed, Cathie, and carry out some soap and a towel, and have the boy bathe his feet."

Phinny followed the little girl toward the shed.

"Oh, Phinny, I'm so glad you've come. There's a spare-room here for company where you can sleep, and you can swing under the trees, and there's a brook for you to go fishing in, and as soon as I learn to knit, I'll knit you some stockings," concluded Cathie happily.

"I shan't stay here," said Phinny, a little huskily, with a nod toward the kitchen. "She don't want me. She's mad 'cause I come!"

"Mother?" exclaimed Cathie. "Oh, she isn't, Phinny; she'll be real pleased to have you stay. It's the nicest place, Phinny."

"I guess I hadn't any business to try and find you,

anyway, Catherine. She don't like it, and p'raps she will send us both straight back to the asylum."

Cathie's face sobered at this.

"Oh, Phinny," she said.

"Folks do, you know," he said.

Two very solemn-looking children came back to the living-room. Phinny's face and hands and feet were clean. Catherine kept close beside him, and they both looked anxiously toward Mrs. Burton.

"I guess I'll be going now," said Phinny, in a faint voice. "I thank you for the food, ma'am. I didn't expect you'd want me to stay."

"Sit down on the sofa," said Mrs. Burton, and the boy obeyed. Catherine sat down beside him.

"Do you want me to go, too, mother?" she said faintly.

"For the land's sake, who said that I wanted either of you to go!" replied Mrs. Burton.

Catherine's face brightened at once. "There, Phinny," she said, "I told you mother was glad to have you come. And he can sleep in the spare-room, can't he? Phinny hasn't slept in a bed for two weeks!"

"I shall write to Miss Gilman to-night," said Mrs. Burton, firmly, "and tell her that Phinny Trot is

here, and that she must come after him right away."

"Yes'm," said Phinny, but he had resolved to himself that he would not go back to the asylum. He quickly decided that when night came he would slip out of the spare-room and keep on his journey until he found a chance to work.

"She don't want me any more than the asylum folks do," he thought.

CHAPTER VII

PHINNY AND MRS. BURTON

"How did you think to come, Phinny?" asked Catherine, as the two children went up to the swing under the big apple-tree where Cathie had her play-house.

"I don't know," answered the boy gloomily. "I guess hearing Miss Gilman telling about how happy you were here, and how good Mrs. Burton was; and it was so hot in the yard, and I heard Miss Gilman say she guessed that they must make up their minds to keep me, that nobody seemed to want me; and they don't," said the boy, a little fiercely.

"Oh, Phinny Trot, I want you, and I'm just as glad as can be that you thought to come. You can have all the ginger-snaps you want, and isn't it nice out under these lovely trees? Don't you like it here, Phinny?" The little girl's voice had an anxious tone.

"I guess so," rejoined Phinny; "say, did you keep that handkerchief I bought you for a present?"

"Yes, it's in my room in the stand-drawer," an-

swered Catherine, "and I kept the nice umbrella that Josie Smith gave me; that's in the closet."

"I s'pose you want to stay here, don't you?" asked Phinny.

"Why? Don't you want to stay?"

"Don't you see I can't? Didn't she say she was going to write for Miss Gilman to come after me right off? She won't have me."

"Oh, dear!" said Cathie.

"I ain't going back to that asylum," said the boy; "there's nothing to do but stand around in that old brick yard, and nights it is so hot. I'd rather live in the country. I tell you what I'm going to do, Catherine, but don't you tell her."

Catherine shook her head.

"Promise solemn! Say you hope you'll have to go back to that asylum if you tell!" demanded Phinny.

"I promise solemn, I hope that I'll have to go back to the asylum if I tell," repeated the little girl.

"Well, if I say anything about going away she'll stop me, and make me stay till Miss Gilman comes and gets me. And I'm going to stay here to-day, and go to bed here to-night, and then just as soon as everything's quiet I'll creep out of the house and start on again. I guess I can find a chance to work some-

where," and the boy straightened his thin shoulders, and tried to look as if he did not mind journeying on without friends or a home.

"Oh, Phinny, it will be all dark," said Cathie, fearfully.

"I don't care for the dark," answered the boy.

"I s'pose you wouldn't want me to go with you?" suggested Cathie.

The boy shook his head vigorously. "No," he said, "she likes you, and this is a nice place to stay," and he looked about a little wistfully.

The children were soon called in to dinner, and Mrs. Burton filled the boy's plate with nourishing food, and looked a little anxiously at Catherine's sober face.

"After dinner, Cathie, I want you to walk to the village and take this letter to the post-office," said Mrs. Burton, "and you step in to Miss Pitts' shop and tell her I should be much obliged if she will step over and take tea with me to-night."

"Yes'm," replied the little girl. Her eyes were downcast, and the corners of her mouth drooped.

"May Phinny go with me?" she asked.

"No, I guess Phineas has had walking enough for one while, he looks all tired out," said Mrs. Burton.

"He is," said Cathie, with a little choke in her voice, "and his feet are just as sore."

"Well, he can have a good rest this afternoon; you start right along for the post-office, and don't stop to visit with Miss Pitts. Do your errands and come straight home." Mrs. Burton spoke more sharply than Catherine had ever before heard her.

"I guess she's mad at me, 'cause Phinny came," thought the little girl, as she hurried off toward the village; "p'raps when Miss Gilman comes she'll think best for me to go back to the 'sylum. Oh, dear," and hot tears began to roll over Catherine's cheeks, but she bravely wiped them away. "P'raps I'd better go with Phinny, then Miss Gilman can't get me," she thought. "I guess Phinny'd be real glad to have company, 'specially as it will be all dark."

She mailed the letter, and then walked down the village street to Miss Pitts' shop. On the way she met Mr. Goddard, the minister, whom she had asked to adopt Phinny. He gave her a smiling greeting, and noticing the woe-begone expression on the usually happy face, stopped to speak to her.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

Catherine looked up at him wonderingly. If he only would take Phinny, she thought, but she re-

membered Mrs. Burton's caution, and did not again ask him if he wanted to adopt a boy.

"I'm doing errands," she replied.

"And don't you like to do errands for such a kind friend as Mrs. Burton?" he asked, a little reprov-
ingly.

"Yes, sir," replied Cathie, edging carefully past him and hurrying on.

Mr. Goddard looked after her with a sigh. "I hope Mrs. Burton has not made a mistake," he thought. "The child seemed forward the day I talked with her before, asking me to adopt a boy, and to-day she seems sullen," so easy it is to misjudge, for Catherine was neither forward nor sullen.

"There, if I wasn't just thinking about you, dear," said Miss Pitts, when Cathie opened the screen-door and stepped into the shop. "I've just been taking up some knitting for you."

"I'm on an errand," said Cathie, trying to swallow something which kept coming in her throat when she tried to talk. "My mother would be pleased if you would step over to tea to-night."

Miss Pitts took off her glasses and wiped them carefully on the corner of her white apron, then she put them on and looked at Cathie carefully.

"Come here, my dear," she said, and Catherine went obediently toward her.

"Mother told me not to stay, but to hurry right home," she said, as Miss Pitts lifted her to her knee, took off the floppy leghorn hat, and brushed back the wavy hair from the hot little face.

"Did she? Well, I guess you can rest a minute, can't you?"

"I guess I ought to go right back," said Cathie; the choking seemed to be growing worse whenever she tried to talk. "Phinny Trot has come."

"What?" exclaimed Miss Pitts.

"Phinny Trot has come," repeated Cathie, "and mother has written to Miss Gilman to come after him right off."

"Well!" said Miss Pitts. "Does Phinny want to stay?"

"No'm, not unless mother wants him to."

"Well," said Miss Pitts again, "you tell your mother I'll be pleased to come to tea, and that I'll be over in good season. I shall be glad to see Phinny."

Catherine looked up hopefully. "I s'pose you don't want to ——"

"No, not a boy!" replied Miss Pitts firmly; "but I

have a real nice plan in my head for Phinny Trot, and for you, too."

Catherine looked eagerly up into the kind face.

"But I shall have to tell Mrs. Burton first and see what she says. How does she seem to like Phinny?"

"She doesn't seem to like him," said Cathie.

"Well, don't you worry; you just whisper to Phinny when you get home that Miss Pitts has a nice plan for him; and for him to be real pleasant and polite to Mrs. Burton, and after tea to-night we'll tell you all about it."

"And won't Phinny have to go back to the 'sylum?" questioned Cathie, the choky feeling all going out of her throat.

Miss Pitts smiled knowingly.

"You just wait and see," she replied. "Now I am going to give you a big apple for yourself and one for Phinny."

"Oh, goody," said Catherine, the happy smile coming back to her face, "and I guess I must hurry home now."

"Well, I wouldn't hurry and get all het up," advised the milliner. "Just step along comfortably. I'll be over real early," and Cathie, with an apple in each hand, started for home.'

"I know mother will be glad to hear the plan," she thought happily.

Mrs. Burton was at work on a dress for Dinah when Cathie came into the sitting-room. The boy was not in sight.

"Where's Phinny?" asked Catherine, eagerly. "Miss Pitts sent him an apple, and she'll be pleased to come to tea early, and she has a plan for Phinny."

"Has she?" replied Mrs. Burton. "Well, I hope it's a plan that has some sense to it. The boy is out in the shed."

Cathie noticed that Dinah was already partly dressed, and that the little rocking-chair and table, with the work-box on top of it, stood near Mrs. Burton's chair; but she did not seem to care about sewing to-day, and hurried out to give Phinny the apple.

The two children sat down in the shed door, and Cathie began to tell Phinny what Miss Pitts had said.

"How shall I be polite?" asked Phinny.

"I guess," said Catherine thoughtfully, "it would be polite for you to ask her if she wouldn't like your apple."

"All of it?" asked Phinny.

Catherine nodded. "She will probably say, 'No,

thank you,' but if she takes it I'll give you half of mine."

"All right," said the boy, "but I wish that woman had told you what her plan was. Has she a farm?"

"No," said Catherine, turning her apple over admiringly; "she's a milliner."

"What's a milliner?" asked the boy.

"A milliner is a lady who makes hats, and has boxes of beads, and ribbons, and lives over her shop."

"Oh," said Phinny, "then she wouldn't want to adopt a boy."

Catherine shook her head. "No," she said, "I've asked her 'most every time I've seen her; and she hardly waits for me to ask before she says no."

"I guess I'll go in and ask Mrs. Burton if she wants this apple," said Phinny, and he made his somewhat reluctant way toward the sitting-room. Mrs. Burton looked up as he came in the door.

"Wouldn't you like to have this apple?" the boy asked shyly, holding it out toward her.

"For the land's sake," said Mrs. Burton, and then the boy's thin face and anxious eyes softened her heart a little, and she smiled upon him for the first time. "No, dear," she said, "you eat it yourself; but you are a real polite boy to offer it to me. There's a plate

of cookies in the closet; you tell Cathie to get some for you if you get hungry." The boy looked at her wonderingly. She had actually called him "dear," and had said that he was a polite boy. He began to think that this Miss Pitts might have a plan worth listening to. He stood awkwardly silent.

"Did you ever see a black Dinah?" asked Mrs. Burton, lifting the doll. "I've just made this one for Cathie."

"Yes'm," said the boy, but he did not look at Dinah; his eyes were fixed on Mrs. Burton's kind face, until she said,

"Now, run out and eat your apple with Cathie."

"I wish she'd take me," the boy thought, as he went slowly back to the shed. "I guess I'd like her as well as Catherine does."

"What'd she say?" asked the little girl.

The boy sat down beside her and put the apple on the upper step, then he began to examine the toes on his right foot very carefully.

"She said, 'No, dear,'" he answered huskily; "and she said I was a very polite boy."

"My," said Catherine, smiling at him, "I shouldn't be a mite s'prised if she was going to 'dopt you too, Phinny."

CHAPTER VIII

MISS PITTS' PLAN

"DID you ever see the beat!" was Mrs. Burton's greeting when Miss Pitts came over in the late afternoon. Mrs. Burton's usually smiling face was clouded with anxiety. "I declare, Eliza," she continued, as Miss Pitts removed her shade hat and gray lisle-thread gloves and seated herself near the window, "if I know what to do. That boy has come, and he's a good boy, if ever I saw one, and he's got to go right back to the asylum. I have written to Miss Gilman to come after him the minute she gets my letter; and by good rights she ought to get here to-morrow afternoon."

"Cathie's eyes were all red. She had been crying when she got to my shop," said Miss Pitts.

"I suppose she had. I never see the beat of Cathie; she was so tickled to have Phineas come, and ever since I spoke of sending him back where he belongs she has acted as if she were afraid of me."

"She probably thinks that you will send her back."

Mrs. Burton laughed a little at the suggestion. "I should just as soon think of going to the asylum my-

self as I should of sending Catherine there. Why, she is just the same as my own."

"You never thought of adopting a boy?" asked Miss Pitts.

"Eliza Pitts, I never thought of adopting anything. Cathie walked in here as if I had sent for her, but as for this boy, I can't take him. I don't want him, and if I did I couldn't afford to feed and clothe him. My soul! to hear you talk, Eliza, anybody would think I was set down here to look out for and bring up every orphan child that saw fit to run away."

"Where is Phinny, now?" asked Miss Pitts.

"He and Cathie are on the side steps. I gave him a pocket-knife I happened to have, and, near as I can make out, he's whittling out a boat for Cathie to sail in the brook."

Miss Pitts tiptoed carefully out into the kitchen and looked through the door at the children.

"Did you ever see anything so thin and homely as that boy?" whispered Mrs. Burton, who had followed her.

The two women stepped softly back to the sitting-room and sat down.

"Father left some pretty good coats," remarked Miss Pitts thoughtfully. Mrs. Burton made no

response. "And as for blouses for a boy that size, it isn't a bit of work to make a few gingham blouses." Mrs. Burton remained silent, and Miss Pitts continued, as if thinking aloud, "there's enough good cloth in father's old clothes to fit that boy out for a year, and I'd take pleasure in knitting him enough good stout stockings and mittens for the winter. I suppose his boots would cost something."

"For the land's sake, Eliza, are you planning to adopt Phineas? Is that the plan Cathie said you wanted to talk over?" and Mrs. Burton stopped rocking and turned an eager look toward her friend.

"Me? Adopt a boy!" Miss Pitts looked at her hostess in astonishment. "What on earth would I do with a boy? Teach him millinery? I am surprised that you should think of such a thing!" and Miss Pitts turned her reproachful gaze upon Mrs. Burton.

"Well, you seemed to be planning out clothes for him."

"I was planning to be of help to you, Mrs. Burton. I thought if you saw your way to giving Phinnie a home I'd agree to fit him out with suitable clothing; and more than that"—and Miss Pitts made an impressive pause—"I'll take Cathie off your hands."

"My soul!" ejaculated Mrs. Burton, beginning to rock vigorously.

"Yes," continued Miss Pitts, "it flashed into my mind the minute I saw the poor child to-day. She looked so unhappy, and was so miserable about that poor boy, that I thought in a minute, 'There! Mrs. Burton can take Phinny, and Cathie can come and live with me.'"

"You did!" said Mrs. Burton in a faint voice.

"Yes," replied Miss Pitts; "to tell you the truth, I took a fancy to Cathie the minute I saw her, and if you hadn't taken her I should have."

Mrs. Burton looked at her friend in amazement.

"Eliza Pitts!" she said solemnly, "have you the heart to sit there and tell me that you expect me to hand over my own little girl and take that red-haired, long-legged boy in exchange?"

The two women had become so interested in their discussion that they had not heard the children come in through the kitchen, but Phinny and Cathie now stood at the sitting-room door and, at a motion from Phinny, Cathie kept silent.

"I don't see why not," responded Miss Pitts. "Cathie's adoption papers are not signed, and I guess I can give her as good a bringing-up as you can; and

a boy would be a great deal more useful to you on a place like this than a girl would. You really need a boy here."

As Cathie heard this she clasped Phinny's hand, and nodded happily.

"Well, Eliza," said Mrs. Burton more amiably, "you can give up that plan right off. Cathie will stay right here with me, and the boy goes back to the asylum to-morrow."

"Oh, dear," said Cathie, from the doorway, and both the women turned in surprise to see the two children looking at them with solemn faces.

"Oh, Miss Pitts, won't she let Phinny stay?" said Cathie, running toward Miss Pitts. "Why won't she let him stay?"

Miss Pitts looked over Cathie's head and nodded triumphantly toward Mrs. Burton.

"Cathie," said Mrs. Burton, "come here. Miss Pitts says that she wants me to take Phineas, and let you go and live with her."

"Then Phinny would have a nice home here with Mrs. Burton," interrupted Miss Pitts, "and you would see him almost every day, and he could bring in wood, and help her, and you would have a nice home with me. Don't you think that would be nice, Cathie?"

"Yes'm," said Cathie, a little faintly. Miss Pitts nodded toward Mrs. Burton again.

"And you are willing to come and live with me if Mrs. Burton will take Phinny?" questioned Miss Pitts.

The little girl turned an anxious looks toward Mrs. Burton.

"I guess my mother wants me to stay here," she said faintly.

"Then you are a selfish little girl," said Miss Pitts. "You could have gotten a nice home for Phinny, but you won't."

"Oh!" said Catherine, "oh, Phinny!" and she turned toward the door. But Phinny was not there. Out to the shed ran Cathie, calling "Phinnie, Phinny," but no answer came. Out under the apple-trees she ran calling his name, while Mrs. Burton and Miss Pitts looked up and down the road for a sight of the missing boy.

Catherine came back to the house crying bitterly.

"He's runned off again," she sobbed, "and his poor toes are all hurt, and Phinny thinks nobody wants him. Oh, dear, oh, mother, you'd ought to took Phinny."

It was dark before they gave up looking for the

boy, and for the first time since she had found a home Catherine cried herself to sleep.

"We didn't seem to think that that poor boy had any feelings," said Mrs. Burton, when she bade Miss Pitts good-night.

"I know it," agreed Miss Pitts remorsefully. "I tell you what, Mrs. Burton, when we do find him he shall stay right with me and I'll do everything I can for him."

"There, Eliza!" replied Mrs. Burton admiringly, "if you haven't got the best heart in the world; but I've been thinking that if you felt like helping out with the boy's clothes as you spoke of doing, that I'd have him stay right here. He'd be a sight of company for Cathie, and, as you were saying, he'd be a good deal of help to me. I guess I could manage all right."

"To think of his starting off like that with his poor, sore feet," said Miss Pitts. "He saw that he wasn't wanted and he wouldn't hang around. I believe he's a real manly sort of a boy."

"We must try and get track of him and get him back some way," responded Mrs. Burton. "Soon as morning comes I'm going to get the Jones boy to hitch up and drive me up the river road. I don't be-

lieve a boy as tired as Phinny will get very far, and I mean to find him."

"Well, I'm willing to do my part," said Miss Pitts. "I'll keep my eye out on the way home, and to-morrow I'll get Mr. Goddard to drive me toward the Junction," and with anxious hearts the two friends said good-night.

As Phinny overheard the discussion in regard to Cathie going to live with Miss Pitts, a new trouble came into his heart. He heard Miss Pitts say that Catherine's papers of adoption were not yet signed. That meant, he thought, that the little girl could be sent back to the asylum at any time, and all because he had come to this place where Cathie was so happy. The boy felt that he had spoiled everything. He wished that he had stayed at the asylum. What if the brick-paved yard was hot, and what matter if he did not like living there; men had to stand hard things; and he straightened his thin little shoulders. He would go on, he would not bother people, and the boy fled through the kitchen, across the orchard, and down the river road. His feet hurt him, but he went on as rapidly as he could go until after dusk, then he crawled over a wall and lay down in a bed of tall brakes. His feet ached, a chill little wind was blow-

ing, and Phinny was hungry. He began to feel a little sorry for himself.

"I wish she had liked me," he thought. "She called me 'dear'; I s'pose she calls Catherine 'dear' every day," and with this thought the tired boy went to sleep.

CHAPTER IX

FINDING PHINNY

WHEN Miss Gilman arrived at Mrs. Burton's house the next day she was surprised to find it closed, and after waiting on the front steps until warned by Ambrose that her train was nearly due, she returned to Boston wondering if Mrs. Burton, Catherine and Phinny had all run off together.

Early that morning Mrs. Burton and Catherine were astir, and for once Princess did not receive much attention. As soon as breakfast was over Cathie was sent to their next neighbor's to ask Leander Jones to hitch up his white horse and take them down the river road to look for Phinny. Leander Jones was nearly fifteen, and often did errands for Mrs. Burton. He listened to Catherine's story and quickly harnessed his horse and went after Mrs. Burton.

"Now you drive slow, Leander," said Mrs. Burton, "and tend right to the horse, for I don't want to be upset out of this wagon, heavy as I be, and Cathie and I will keep a sharp outlook for Phineas."

"Don't you think I'd better hurry along, ma'am,

for a few miles?" suggested Leander. "He would be apt to go as fast as he could until it got pretty dark."

"So he would," agreed Mrs. Burton. "Well, you use your best judgment, Leander, and when you get about as far as a tired boy would be apt to run, then you begin to slow up."

Catherine was very quiet. She felt that if she had only agreed to Miss Pitts' plan to go and live with her that Mrs. Burton would have made Phinny welcome. And, though the thought of leaving her new home and mother seemed exile to the little girl, she felt that Miss Pitts was right in calling her selfish. She felt it was her fault that Phinny was homeless.

Mrs. Burton had not slept well. She, too, reproached herself for not making the boy welcome at her home, and her deep sighs as they rode along caused the Jones boy to turn a cautious look of wonder in her direction.

About three miles down the river road Leander brought old Whitey out of the comfortable trot into a slow walk. The road now ran very near to the river, and they could look across the stream and see the smooth fields and comfortable farmhouses on the other side.

"Phinny wouldn't try to get across that river, would he?" asked Cathie, anxiously.

"My soul!" said Mrs. Burton. "I should hope not. It's too deep to wade and too wide to swim."

"There's a shallow place further down where people ford the river," said Leander. "He could get across there all right; and I shouldn't wonder if that's what he did. It's what I should do if I was running away. Whoa!" and Leander leaned over Mrs. Burton and carefully observed a stone wall.

"What do you see, Leander?" whispered Mrs. Burton.

"You just hold the reins, ma'am, and let me get out a minute."

Mrs. Burton took the reins obediently, and the boy sprang from the wagon.

He walked slowly toward the wall where the grass had been crushed by steps, and peered over; then he turned a triumphant look toward Mrs. Burton.

"I'll bet he slept right here all night," he said. "The brakes are all crushed down close up to this wall. Probably he hasn't been gone from this place more than two hours."

"Which way did he go?" demanded Mrs. Burton.

The Jones boy shook his head.

"I should have kept along near the wall toward the ford," he said, climbing back into the wagon. "I should've kept near the wall so as to jump over if I heard any one coming. But this boy doesn't know about the ford and he may go straight by."

Leander took the reins from Mrs. Burton's willing hands and old Whitey resumed her slow walk.

"There isn't a house this side of the ford, is there?" said Mrs. Burton. "Phineas will be dreadful hungry."

"Oh, dear," said Cathie; "and we didn't think to bring anything for him to eat."

"Yes, indeed we did, my dear," replied Mrs. Burton. "What did you suppose mother put that basket in the wagon for? There is a nice luncheon in that basket."

"We may need it even if we don't find the boy," suggested Leander.

"Like as not," agreed Mrs. Burton.

When they reached the fording place they were uncertain what to do. The road down to the ford was not much traveled, while the main road now led on by farmhouses, and a church-spire could be seen in a neighboring village.

Old Whitey was again brought to a full stop, while Mrs. Burton considered the subject.

"I declare, Leander, I'm going to leave it to you.

‘Set a boy to catch a boy.’ Now, if you were running away, and if you were a stranger in these parts, and looked down toward the river and saw that you could get across, and then looked along a smooth road to a village, which would you take?”

Leander pointed to the river.

“Would you go that way if you hadn’t had any breakfast?” asked Cathie.

The Jones boy nodded.

“Well,” said Mrs. Burton with a sigh, “you be dreadful careful and not run up against any hidden rocks and upset us.”

The Jones boy seemed much amused by Mrs. Burton’s advice, but he answered respectfully, “Yes, ma’am, I’ll be careful, but you can see all the rocks there are, ma’am; the river is pretty low here.”

However, he drove down the slope to the river very carefully, and Whitey waded into the cool water as if she enjoyed it. Mrs. Burton held tight hold of the wagon seat with one hand, and looked fearfully ahead. They crossed the stream safely, and on the other side were again in a puzzle, wondering which way Phinny would turn.

“We ought to be pretty near to him now,” said Leander.

Cathie was looking carefully at everything on her side of the road, and suddenly she called out,

"Oh, whoa the horse, whoa the horse; I see Phinny."

Before old Whitey had fairly come to a standstill, the little girl was out of the wagon and over a low stone wall, and running rapidly across the field after a fleeing boy.

"You hold the reins, ma'am," said the Jones boy; and in a moment he had joined in the pursuit.

"Phinny, Phinny," called Cathie, but although the boy turned his head for an instant, he did not stop running. They could see that he limped, and at last he gave up and fell forward upon his face in the soft grass.

"Go back and get my mother," commanded Catherine, and the Jones boy reluctantly retraced his steps toward the wagon, while Cathie ran on toward Phinny.

The boy did not move when the little girl stopped beside him, and Cathie could see that he was crying. The ragged straw hat was gone, and Cathie put her hand gently on the rough red head, and in a moment put her own head down beside his.

"Oh, Phinny," she said, "ain't you awful hungry?"



The boy did not move

The boy made no answer.

"Mother has got lunch for you in a basket," she continued. "She and the Jones boy are fetching it across the field now, and Phinny, my mother likes you."

At this the boy turned his head and looked at her cautiously.

"Sit up, Phinny, before that Jones boy sees you," warned Cathie, and Phinny slowly rolled over and drew himself into a sitting posture, wiping his eyes on his shirt sleeve.

"Oh, Phinny, you are going to be took!" said Cathie.

"Not much I ain't," responded the boy. "I won't go back to that old asylum; I'll get away yet."

"'Dopted, I mean, Phinny, truly 'dopted; my mother's going to take you."

The boy regarded her doubtfully. Mrs. Burton and the Jones boy, carrying the lunch basket, were now near at hand, and in a moment Mrs. Burton sat down beside them.

"I'm tired out," she declared; "and hungry too. Leander, you just open that lunch basket and set forth what there is. Phineas, you step over here beside me." The boy limped to her side.

"Sit right down, dear; right between me and Cathie. You must be hungry."

"Yes'm," said the boy slowly.

"Well, boys that run off from a good home usually do get hungry. Now, you listen to me. Don't you ever run off again unless you have good shoes on your feet, a blanket to sleep under at night, and a good lot of food with you."

The boys both smiled at this, and Mrs. Burton continued,

"I didn't get much sleep worrying about you, Phineas, and now as I'm going to have you live with me and Cathie for a spell I hope you won't run off again. Do you like chicken sandwiches? Leander, we might as well call this a picnic. You just take out that bottle of milk that's wrapped up in a wet cloth and pass it to Phineas."

Cathie was not very hungry, but she sat very close to her friend and spread his bread very thick with apple jelly. When she looked at his feet she resolved to learn to knit as soon as she could so that Phinny could have some nice soft stockings.

It was late in the afternoon when Mrs. Burton and the children reached home. Phineas and Leander had made friends during the ride, and, although

Phinny did not say much, he sat very straight beside Leander, and when he looked toward Mrs. Burton his eyes seemed to shine with affection.

"I wish she'd make believe I was her boy," he whispered to Catherine. The little girl nodded happily. "She will," she replied.

Miss Pitts was waiting for them, comfortably seated on the front door-step. There was a large bundle beside her.

"I just stitched up a blouse," she whispered to Mrs. Burton, as they went into the sitting-room, "and I stepped over to the store and got him a straw hat and a brush and comb."

"There," said Mrs. Burton, admiringly, "if that ain't just like you, Eliza! How did you know that we'd find him?"

"I felt sure of it," replied Miss Pitts. "I got father's old clothes out to-day, and just as soon as I can get a pattern I'll cut him out some trousers."

Before Phinny went to bed that night in the spare-room, Mrs. Burton had a little talk with him. He listened carefully, and told her he should never want to run away again if she was sure she wanted him to stay.

"I can do errands, and chop wood, and make your

garden," he said ; "and when I get older I'll earn money for you."

"There, bless you, of course you will," responded Mrs. Burton. "And I'll do the best I can for you. It ain't so I can do everything I'd like to, but I guess you and Cathie will be real happy here, and Miss Pitts brought you over a nice striped blouse and a new hat."

"I'm much obliged," said Phinny, soberly. "You're awful good to me, ma'am."

CHAPTER X

MAKING FRIENDS

PHINNY did not need to be called the next morning. He was awake very early, and could hear the sleepy twittering of birds in their nests in the big elm-tree whose branches almost touched the windows. He turned his head on the soft pillow and looked about the room. On the walls was the most beautiful paper he had ever seen. It was a pale gray tint with wreaths of pink roses scattered over it. These wreaths seemed to be held together on the gray background with pink ribbons. There was a fireplace of shining red bricks, and on the mantel-shelf stood two tall brass candlesticks. There was a high chest of drawers, and there was a long gilt mirror between the two windows. There were two high-backed chairs, and on the floor was the loveliest carpet! Phinny leaned over the side of the bed to look at it. It seemed to have every color in it, and yet they all blended into a soft tone that was restful and well suited to the room. After Phinny had looked about this lovely room he began to wonder if Mrs. Burton really wanted him to stay in this beautiful place.

"She said she did," he whispered to himself, as he slid quietly out of bed and began to dress. "And I'm going to do everything I can for her so she won't ever be sorry." The boy was down-stairs by the time the sun was up and laid the kitchen fire ready to light. Then he swept off the back porch, and seeing nothing more that he could do he sat down on the steps and waited for Mrs. Burton, and it was not long before he heard her step on the stairs.

"Well, I declare!" she exclaimed approvingly, when she found the fire ready to light, and saw Phinny sitting on the steps. "I guess you are going to be a real help, and I'll have breakfast ready in a jiffy. You just take this bucket and pump some nice fresh water," and she handed a wooden bucket to the boy, who hurried away with it to the pump.

"Cathie likes to sleep," said Mrs. Burton, when Phinny brought in the pail brimming with clear, sparkling water; "and I like to have her; it's good for little girls and for boys, too. Didn't you sleep well, Phineas?" and she looked at him a little anxiously.

"Yes'm," replied the boy; "that's a lovely room I slept in. I guess it's too good for me. That nice carpet and everything."

"I made that carpet," said Mrs. Burton, a little note of satisfaction in her voice. "It's a rag carpet, and I sewed the rags and wove it, and the room ain't a mite too good for you if you'll only be just a little careful."

"Yes'm," said Phinny. "I'll try and be careful, but I'm afraid I'll wear the carpet out."

"Never mind," said Mrs. Burton. "I should like to make another one. I've got my loom in the shed chamber, and sewing carpet-rags will be something for Cathie and me to do winter evenings, so you needn't worry about the carpet, not a mite."

"Couldn't I sew carpet-rags too?" asked Phinny.

"I don't see any reason why you couldn't," agreed Mrs. Burton, as she looked kindly toward the thin-faced boy.

"Now, Phineas," she continued, as she filled the tea-kettle and put it on the stove, "you seem like a real sensible boy, so I'm going to talk sense to you. Cathie's a girl, and nothing but a baby, anyway, and I know all about girls and how to bring them up, and I ain't worried a mite but what I can do well by her, but boys are different; I don't know a thing about bringing up boys," and Mrs. Burton turned such an anxious look toward Phinny that he smiled at her

encouragingly; "and I shall expect a good deal of you, Phineas. I shall expect you to be a credit to me. I don't plan to adopt you, and give you my name, same as I do Cathie, but I'll tell you just what I do plan. I will give you a home, and send you to school and treat you just like a son until you are big enough and capable of earning your living. Now, if you are satisfied to stay with me on those terms, I'll see to it that the asylum folks consent."

Phinny had been watching Mrs. Burton anxiously.

"I'd like to stay," he answered.

"That's right. Now that's all settled. And about bringing you up, Phineas; you'll have to sort of rest on your own judgment, for I'm afraid I shan't know how to deal with you. You just go right ahead and do what you think is right, and any time when you ain't quite sure about it, we'll talk it over together."

"Yes'm," said the boy seriously.

"There I guess then everything is all settled. This is your home now, and don't you worry about that carpet; don't track in any more dirt than's necessary, and everything will be all right. Do you like eggs boiled or dropped on toast?"

Phinny felt that this was too much consideration.

"I don't care which way," he answered.

"Now, Phineas," said Mrs. Burton, a little sternly, "don't ever say that about anything. You do care, and if you don't, you ought to. Stop and think. Will eggs taste better to you boiled or dropped on toast? You must decide on things yourself; no matter if it's eggs or what it is, I expect you to have decision. How on earth are you going to bring yourself up if you can't decide on a little thing like eggs? Now, Phineas, how do you want your eggs?"

"Boiled!" replied Phineas firmly.

"That's right!" said Mrs. Burton admiringly; "and do you like them hard or soft?"

"Hard," replied Phinny.

Mrs. Burton nodded again. "You just keep your eyes on this fire while I step up-stairs and attend to Cathie," she said, filling a pitcher with warm water and putting a towel over her arm. "I suppose you've washed your face and hands. I see you've brushed your hair."

"Yes'm," said the boy.

When Mrs. Burton got up-stairs Cathie was fast asleep, and Princess lay curled up on the foot of the bed fast asleep also.

Mrs. Burton stooped over and kissed the little girl, who opened her eyes and smiled up at her sleepily.

"I was dreaming about Phinny," she said.

"Well, now spring right up, for Phineas is downstairs waiting for his breakfast, and after breakfast I want you to show him where our vegetable garden is and tell him all about the barn, and the shed, and how to feed the chickens, and everything, because Phineas is going to live with us now."

"My," said Cathie, "isn't it lovely Phinny happened to come here? And isn't it nice that you had a spare room for him?"

"You wear your pink calico to-day," responded Mrs. Burton, turning back toward the stairway.

"If ever I see the beat," she said to herself as she returned to the kitchen; "if Cathie don't seem to think that it's a favor to me to have every stray child in the state come wandering in here for me to take care of."

Phinny was standing directly in front of the stove, and Mrs. Burton patted his thin shoulder as she went past him.

"You didn't put on your new blouse this morning, did you, sonny?" she said.

The boy looked at her gratefully. "Did you want me to?" he asked eagerly.

"No, by to-morrow I'll have you some new trousers

and undershirts, and we'll have to see about shoes and stockings for Sundays, and for you to wear when school begins."

Cathie could hardly eat her breakfast, because she had so much to talk about; and as soon as Phinny had finished his eggs and toast and drank his glass of milk she wanted him to go and see the garden, and the brook, and the white chickens. But Phinny stood close by the table looking at Mrs. Burton, and only nodded in answer to Cathie.

"Can't I wash the dishes?" he asked. "I know how; I used to help wash dishes at the asylum."

"Well, now you are real thoughtful, Phineas," said Mrs. Burton; "but I guess I will wash the dishes. However, perhaps some day I shall want you to, and I'm real glad you know how." Then, as Phineas stood looking at her a little wistfully, she said, "I would like to have you feed the chickens; I generally mix up some meal and shorts for them. I'll step out in the shed and show you how to mix it this morning, and after this you can do it yourself. You just bring me a dipper of water," and followed by the children Mrs. Burton went out to the shed.

In one corner of the shed stood two covered barrels, a tin pan set on the top of one. Mrs. Burton mixed

the food for the chickens and gave the pan to Phinny.

"Cathie will show you the chicken-house, and be sure the door is fastened when you come out; and if that white rooster tries to gobble up more than his share, you just drive him off, and see that the others get what belongs to them."

"Yes'm," said both the children, starting across the yard to the chicken-house, while Mrs. Burton went back to her kitchen.

Cathie ran along ahead while the boy followed more slowly, carrying the pan of food very carefully.

After they had fed the chickens Cathie showed him Mrs. Burton's vegetable garden. Phinny noticed that there were weeds and grass growing among the young plants, and when they went back to the house he asked Mrs. Burton if he could not weed the garden.

"Well, I don't know," she answered slowly. "Are you sure you know tomato plants from chicory-weed, and can you tell young onions from witch-grass?"

"Come and see," said Phinny eagerly.

"Those are weeds, and those are weeds, and those are weeds," said the boy, pointing to the grass and weeds which grew rankly along the garden bed.

"So they are," said Mrs. Burton; "but how does a

boy who has lived in a brick yard know about weeds ? ”

“ Oh, they grow out in the open lots back of the asylum,” said the boy. “ But what is a tomato plant, and what is a young onion ? ”

Then Mrs. Burton pointed out the tomatoes, and the onions, the carrots and turnips, and showed him the flourishing plot of potatoes. “ And here is my herb garden,” she said, going to a corner near the chicken-house ; “ here is where I get my sage to put in the stuffing for roast chicken, and here is where the mint grows to make mint-sauce for lamb ; and this is summer-savory, and this is lemon-verbena.”

Phinny watched and listened eagerly, and repeated the names of the plants and herbs.

“ Can I take care of the garden ? ” he asked.

“ Why, I should like to have you,” replied Mrs. Burton. “ I have always hired the Jones boy to do it, but Leander ain’t much interested in gardens, and come to think of it he hasn’t been near this garden for two weeks. It will be a great help to have you do it. I’ll show you where I keep the trowel and hoe.”

“ Ain’t Phinny going to play with me any ? ” questioned Cathie. “ He hasn’t seen my beads, nor Dinah, nor the brook, nor anything.”

"I can see those after I get through weeding," said Phinny.

"I guess I needed a boy just like you, Phineas," said Mrs. Burton approvingly.

Phinny went to work on the weeds, and Cathie sat down on the grass and watched him happily.

"Isn't it nice that we are both right here with my mother?" she said.

Phinny nodded. "But she isn't going to be my mother," he said; "she's going to let me stay here and do well by me, and she said I'd have to bring myself up because she didn't know much about boys."

"Oh, Phinny, but you don't know how to bring yourself up," said Catherine.

The boy nodded again. "Yes, I do, too," he said. "She told me to go right ahead and do what I thought was right, and I'm going to. Of course I must help all I can."

"But I am truly 'dopted," said Cathie. "Oh, I wish my mother would truly 'dopt you, Phinny."

"Girls are different," said Phinny. "I guess I'm pretty lucky not to be sent straight back to the asylum."

"P'raps my mother will 'dopt you, Phinny," urged the little girl.

But the boy shook his head. "Don't talk about it, Cathie," he said. "She says I am going to school, and am to wear shoes and stockings Sundays!"

The children looked at each other and smiled.

"Well, anyway, aren't you just glad you came?" said Cathie.

CHAPTER XI

GOING FISHING

PHINNY was busy in the garden one morning about a week after his arrival at Mrs. Burton's, when he saw Leander Jones coming across the field. Leander had on a big straw hat, his trousers were rolled above his knees, and he carried a long pole over his shoulder.

"Hullo!" he called, as he came near the garden fence. "Want to go fishing?"

Phinny's eyes brightened and he was on his feet in an instant; then he looked at the little sprouts of grass springing up along the garden beds, and he suddenly remembered that Mrs. Burton had said she should want him to take a basket of eggs to the village store, and he shook his head.

"Why not?" asked Leander. "Won't Mrs. Burton let you?"

"I guess she would if I asked her," said Phinny.

"Then hurry up and ask her. I've got bait enough for both of us, and I'll lend you a line and you can cut a pole. It's kind of hazy this morning, and I'll bet the trout will bite fine. Hurry up."

"I can't go." Phinny was down on his knees again, and had begun weeding. He remembered that Mrs. Burton had told him that he would have to decide about things for himself, and that he must decide right.

"All right," said Leander, good-naturedly; "you can go next time."

"Oh, can I?" said Phinny eagerly. "Say, you're awful good to ask me. When you going again?"

"Oh, I don't know—to-morrow, perhaps. Could you go to-morrow?"

"Yes, I could," said Phinny. "I never went fishing in my life!"

Leander was sitting on the fence watching the smaller boy.

"Say, why can't you go this morning?" he asked, with new interest.

"I've got to weed these two rows of tomatoes, and Mrs. Burton wants me to take some eggs to the village."

Leander rested his pole carefully along the fence and jumped down on the garden side. "I'll help you weed, and Cathie can take the eggs to the village," he announced.

"Cathie," he called, and the little girl came running

across the yard from the back steps where she had been playing with Dinah.

"Don't you wish you could see Miss Pitts to-day?" asked Leander.

"Oh, yes!" said Cathie, remembering that Miss Pitts had promised her another box of beads.

"Well, you ask Mrs. Burton if she don't want you to take a basket of eggs to the store, and then you can go in and see Miss Pitts," said Leander.

"Oh, goody," said Cathie, "you are real good to think of it, Leander," and the little girl started back for the house, but Phinny overtook her.

"Do you want to take the eggs?" he asked breathlessly.

"Oh, yes, Phinny!" she answered.

"All right; then I'm going fishing," he answered, and in a short time the boys were on their way across the pasture toward the brook, and Cathie was trudging happily along the road to the village.

The boys were not long in reaching the brook, and after crawling over slippery rocks and through a dense growth of alders they came to a place where the stream flowed clearly over a stretch of white sand. Just above this were several rocks and dark shadowy pools where Leander said they were sure to get a bite. He

had cut Phinny a pole, fixed the line and bait for him, and with a few whispered directions told him where to stand.

In a few moments Phinny felt a sharp tug on his line, and with a quick pull and swing of his rod he had landed his first trout.

“Gee! Didn’t you hear him bite?” he called out to Leander.

It was a very small trout, but the boys looked at it admiringly. Leander soon caught a much larger one. Then the boys waited patiently for another hungry trout to take the bait, but not a bite rewarded them, and after a while they made their way further up the stream. Sometimes they waded along the edges of the brook, and then the rocky banks made it advisable for them to keep well above the brook. Squirrels ran chirping up and down the trees, and Leander told Phinny the names of several different birds which now and then fluttered down near the stream.

How happy Phinny was. It seemed to him a new world. He looked at Leander admiringly, and thought how much the older boy knew and how kind he was; and when Leander said that it was time for lunch, and built a fire beside a great rock and cooked their fish over it, Phinny could hardly talk, he was so happy.

Leander showed him where the blueberries were ripening in the pastures, and as they went further up the stream and came to a thick growth of tall spruce and fir trees he told him that only a year before a bear had been seen near the edge of the woods eating raspberries. It was very nearly supper-time when the boys got home, and Mrs. Burton thought to herself that Phineas seemed more like a boy than she had ever expected to see him. They did not bring home any fish, but Phinny declared as he came into the pleasant kitchen, "Oh, I never had such a good time in my life."

"Well, I'm real glad," said Mrs. Burton. "You must go again. Did you see any blueberries ripe enough to pick? I should like a blueberry pie."

"I guess I can get enough for a pie," said Phinny. "I'll go to-morrow."

"I had a nice time, too," said Catherine. "Miss Pitts gave me a pattern of a house all marked out on funny thin cloth, and I am going to sew beads all over the pattern. And I shall sew blue beads for the sky, and white beads for the house, and green beads for the blinds on the house, and in front of the house is a rose bush, and I shall sew pink beads for the roses."

Phinny looked at her thoughtfully. He wondered

why Catherine should care so much about beads when there were brooks with fish in them, and woods where bears had been seen; and when one could cook fish and eat them out-of-doors, why should they care about bead houses?

"And I saw the minister," continued Cathie; "and I told him that Phinny had come. And he said he was 'sprised! And he said that he should come over and see you, mother. And I told him we didn't want anybody to take Phinny now; that we was going to keep him. We are, ain't we, mother?"

"Why, of course," said Mrs. Burton, and she wondered a little what the minister would have to say about her increasing family. "He's so set on foreign missions," she thought, "maybe he'll think I ought to do more for the heathen instead of bringing up stray children," and she looked at Cathie a little anxiously. But Mr. Goddard was coming to see her for a different reason. The good man had seen Miss Pitts and had heard Phineas' story, and listened to Miss Pitts' account of the boy's good disposition, and as he listened Mr. Goddard had resolved to take Phineas himself. He felt that good-natured Mrs. Burton was not the right person to bring up a boy; he remembered that her means were small, and if she had taken Cathie the

minister felt that perhaps it was his duty to help her out of her new troubles by taking Phineas off her hands.

As he walked briskly toward the pleasant cottage the morning after meeting Cathie, he resolved that he would do well by this lad who had no home, no father or mother. He would have him begin lessons at once, and recite to him every morning, then if he showed any marked ability as a student, he would have him fitted for the ministry. Mr. Goddard went happily along, his mind filled with the thought of Phineas' gratitude and pleasure when he should hear of the good fortune which was in store for him, when suddenly his feet seemed caught in a net, and with a smothered ejaculation he fell face foremost into the dusty road.

That very morning Leander and Phinny were playing that the road was a jungle in India, and they were hunters in pursuit of a tiger. Leander had just read a book about tiger-hunting which said that native hunters often stretched nets across the jungle paths; the tigers became entangled in these nets and were then easily killed by the huntsmen. So this cord fastened across the path beside the road was their net for tigers. Leander was the tiger just then, and

Phinny, armed with a large wooden spear, was pursuing him through the woods toward the net. Leander, with a noise supposed to resemble the cry of a panther, sprang from the woods near the path just as Mr. Goddard stumbled and fell; Phinny, in full pursuit, rushed after his prey, and in a moment Leander had fallen over Mr. Goddard's feet, while Phinny with a yell of triumph jumped upon the tiger's prostrate form and pinned it to the earth.

In a moment Mr. Goddard was on his feet brushing the dust from his hat and coat. The boys, rushing from the woods at the very moment of his fall, convinced him that his downfall had been planned. He had always known Leander as a quiet, reliable boy, and the minister at once decided that this red-headed asylum boy, who now sat on Leander's prostrate figure with a look of amazement on his thin face, was the one to blame.

"Come here, you young scamp!" he demanded instantly, giving up all idea of adopting such a young ruffian. "What do you mean by laying traps across the highway?" But the boys had speedily come to their senses and were making back to the woods, without waiting for Mr. Goddard's opinion.

That gentleman cut the cord which had so suddenly

brought him to the ground, and then continued his walk in a very different frame of mind. He must speak firmly to Mrs. Burton about this boy whom she had seen fit to bring into the neighborhood. He felt that he must use his influence to persuade her to send Phineas back to the asylum.

As the minister walked on the two boys looked at each other. "I guess we hadn't ought to have put the cord across the path," said Leander. "Wasn't he mad, though?" and the boy laughed a little at the remembrance of Mr. Goddard's wrathful face. Phinny laughed too, but in a moment he grew serious.

"Wasn't it right to put the cord across there, Lin?" he asked.

The Jones boy shook his head. "I guess not," he answered; "but we can't help it now. He ought to have known that we didn't put it there to trip him up. If he'd only asked us—but let's play something else." Phinny shook his head.

"I guess I'll run after him and tell him about it," he said.

"All right," agreed Leander. "I'll scoot for home; it won't take two of us to tell him, and he won't believe us, anyway."

Phinny dropped his spear and ran swiftly down the

road after the minister, and in a few minutes was close beside him. Mr. Goddard looked at him sternly.

"I wanted to tell you, sir, that we was playing set nets for tigers," gasped Phinny, nearly out of breath. "We didn't think anybody would fall over the strings." Mr. Goddard stopped and regarded the boy closely.

"Do you mean to tell me that string wasn't put there to trip people up?" he said.

"It was put there to trip a tiger up," explained Phinny. "Leander read a book about catching tigers, and we were playing that he was a tiger and I was chasing him into the net, and just as he got there you fell down, sir," said Phinny breathlessly.

"Where is Leander?"

"He's gone home."

"What did you run after me for?" continued Mr. Goddard.

The boy hesitated a moment. "I stopped to think, like Mrs. Burton told me to, and so I had to come. You see," he continued, encouraged by Mr. Goddard's smile, "Mrs. Burton said she didn't know just how to deal with boys, so she wanted me to do right, just as near as I could, and I thought it was right to tell you."

"Well," said Mr. Goddard, "I guess you are the right kind of a boy. I am on my way now to Mrs. Burton's to talk about you."

Phinny's thin brown hand went out to meet the minister's warm clasp.

"We can walk along together, can't we?" said Mr. Goddard.

"Yes, sir," said Phinny, with a little smile. He felt that he liked this tall pleasant-faced man after all.

"My soul," exclaimed Mrs. Burton, as she saw them coming up the path hand-in-hand, "if that don't beat all."

CHAPTER XII

A CHANCE FOR PHINEAS

PHINNY left Mr. Goddard at the front door and ran around the house to the back steps where Catherine and Dinah were established. Catherine had brought out her little rocking-chair, and the small table, and on the table were her work-box and box of beads. Dinah, in a bright pink calico dress, with ruffles around the bottom, white cotton stockings, and low shoes made from a pair of old black kid gloves, sat resting against the side of the house.

Cathie was busy with the bead picture. She was sewing the white beads on the house.

"When this is all done, Phinny," she said, as the boy sat down on the upper step very near Dinah, "Miss Pitts is going to have it framed, and underneath she is going to write 'worked by Catherine Berry Burton, eight years old.'"

"That's what they put on grave-stones in cemeteries," said Phinny. "What your name was, and how old."

"This is different," said Cathie, rocking happily

back and forth. "This is to hang up on the wall for my children to see, and for my mother to be proud of."

"I'm making something for you," said Phineas. "I'm making a trunk for you to put Dinah's clothes in!"

"Oh, Phinny!" and Cathie stopped rocking, "are you truly?"

Phinny nodded. "You come out in the shed and see," he replied.

Cathie put down her bead work and ran along beside Phinny to the shed. There was an old work-bench there which had belonged to Mrs. Burton's father. One end of it was fitted with small drawers which held nails of all sizes. In one drawer were strips and pieces of leather. Another drawer contained screw-drivers, pincers, and small tools. At the other end of the bench were places for planes, for a small saw, gimlets, and a number of other tools. Mrs. Burton had told Phineas that he might use these tools whenever he pleased if he would not take them out of the shed, and would put them in their proper places, and the boy thought that of all the pleasant things that had happened to him nothing could be more delightful than to have tools to use when he wanted to.

He had found some pieces of board in the shed and had already planed them off smoothly and sawed them into the right size for the trunk.

"I'm going to make a cover and have leather hinges fastened on with nice brass-headed tacks," he explained. "And when fall comes I'm going to stain it brown with the juice of butternuts. Leander Jones is going to show me how. He says that you can mash up butternut shells and get a nice brown stain out of it."

"My," said Cathie, and she looked at Phinny admiringly. "Isn't it nice that we thought to come here, Phinny? We have so many lovely things here, don't we?"

Phinny nodded.

"Who is talking to my mother?" she continued, as the sound of voices came to her.

"Leander Jones said it was the minister."

"Mr. Goddard!" said Cathie. "Once I asked him to 'dopt you, Phinny, and he wouldn't. But I'm real glad he didn't, ain't you?" Phinny nodded again.

"I'm going blueberrying with Leander to-morrow," he said. "We are going to take a lunch and stay all day, and get just as many as we can; and I'm going to sell some of mine. Mrs. Burton said I might."

Just then Mrs. Burton came into the shed. "Oh, here you are, Phineas! Well, just step in to the sitting-room and see Mr. Goddard a minute. You can play with Dinah, Cathie, dear."

"Yes'm," said Cathie. But she wondered why Phinny was to go in and speak to Mr. Goddard. Was it possible that Mr. Goddard had changed his mind, and now wanted to adopt Phinny? Cathie grew very sober at the thought, and did not care about trying on Dinah's new dress, or even about sewing beads. She sat down in the little rocking-chair and forgot to rock, and began thinking about the asylum, and of how Phinny would always save his cookies to give to her "between meals." She thought about the handkerchief he had bought her, and of the trunk for Dinah that he was making for her, and it seemed to her that everything would be spoiled if Phinny should go to live with Mr. Goddard. "But Phinny won't go," she finally decided. "Miss Pitts said that my mother needed a boy just like Phinny, and he knows it, and he won't let anybody 'dopt him." At this decision Catherine began to rock a little, then her eyes wandered toward Dinah and she smiled a little, and soon she was busy and happy again with the bead work.

Phineas followed Mrs. Burton into the living-room, and when Mr. Goddard smiled at him he smiled back.

"I have been telling Mrs. Burton how the natives of India catch tigers in nets," said Mr. Goddard.

Then Phinny looked at Mrs. Burton a little anxiously, but she was smiling.

"Phineas is a real good boy," she said. "You ought to see how nice my garden looks, Mr. Goddard; not a weed in it; and as for my kitchen wood-box, Phineas keeps it full without my ever reminding him. I don't see how I ever got along without him," and she smiled so kindly upon the boy that Phinny felt a little choking feeling in his throat. No one had ever said so many pleasant things about him before, and the boy began to wish there was something he could do to show Mrs. Burton how much he loved her.

"Phineas," said Mr. Goddard, "Mrs. Burton tells me that she expects you to use your own judgment about everything, and that you agreed to take the responsibility of deciding what was right for you to do."

"Yes, sir," replied the boy looking steadily at the minister.

"Well, my boy, do you think you can always decide right?"

"Yes, sir," said Phinny.

"But you ran away from the asylum, my boy, and then you ran away from here; do you think that was right?"

"They didn't want me at the asylum," said Phinny. "They used to say that they did wish somebody would take me. They had tried and tried to get folks to but nobody would, so I thought I'd try and find Cathie. But when I got here Mrs. Burton said she couldn't adopt the whole asylum, and I remembered folks didn't want boys, so I went off. I guess it's right not to stay where you ain't wanted, isn't it?" and Phinny looked inquiringly from Mrs. Burton to Mr. Goddard.

"Hmm," said Mr. Goddard. "Now, my boy, how would you like to live with some one who could always tell you just what was right for you to do? Some one who would teach you every day, where you would be the only child in the family and where everything, in reason, would be done for your comfort. In fact, how would you like to live with me?"

"To be adopted?" asked Phineas, "to call you 'father'?"

"Well, no, not exactly," responded Mr. Goddard. "I would agree to give you a good home until you

were of a suitable age to earn your own living. But I do not think I should adopt you."

"Does she want me to go?" he asked a little slowly, nodding his head toward Mrs. Burton.

"She feels, Phineas, that it might be better for you if you should come to live with me," responded the minister kindly, leaning forward and putting a friendly hand upon the boy's shoulder. "I am sure I should like you, my lad; don't you think you could like me?" Phineas smiled back at him.

"Yes, sir," he said; "but I guess I ought to stay here. I have the garden to look after, and the hens, and when winter comes there will be snow for me to shovel. Mrs. Burton seems to need a boy," and he looked toward her as if expecting her to agree with him.

"I declare I guess I do, Mr. Goddard," she said. "As I was saying, I don't know how I ever got along without Phineas. If he wants to stay with me I'm sure I'm glad enough to have him."

When Phinny heard this he felt very happy, and his eyes shone so that Mr. Goddard was more sure than ever that this was a boy who would be a credit to any one. He drew Phineas a little nearer toward him and said, "Well, my boy, you did not catch a

tiger to-day, but you have made a friend, and perhaps you will let me help you bring yourself up!"

Phinny nodded, and Mr. Goddard bade them good-bye and started for home.

"I never saw the beat," said Mrs. Burton, "the way people want to break up my family," and she laughed a little at Phinny's sober face. "Miss Pitts and those other people wanted Cathie, and now here the minister is after you, and right in the blueberry season, too. Well, I must step out and see about dinner. Do you like young beet greens, Phineas?"

"Yes'm," said the boy. "I wish you were my truly mother," he said, going close to her and looking up wistfully.

Mrs. Burton patted him gently on the shoulder. "I'm going to do just as well as I can by you, Phineas," she said. And someway the boy felt disappointed. He wished she had said that he could "pretend" she was his truly mother. He went out on the steps and sat down near Catherine.

"Did the minister want to 'dopt you, Phinny?" Catherine asked.

The boy shook his head. "Nobody wants to adopt boys," he said; "but he wanted to bring me up."

"Oh, Phinny!"

"Yes, he did," continued the boy; "but I'm going to stay here and bring myself up."

"How can you?" said Cathie.

"You wait and see," answered Phinny, resolutely.

CHAPTER XIII

PHINNY SEES A BEAR

PHINNY had to go blueberrying alone, for Leander was busy and Phinny did not want to wait another day. Blueberries were selling for ten cents a quart in the village, and the boy was anxious to earn some money. Mrs. Burton had said that she would buy him shoes and stockings, and Phinny had resolved that he would earn the money to pay for them.

"I'm going to take care of myself," he said to himself, as he trudged across the pasture toward the slope where the blueberry bushes grew. "I'll sell all the blueberries I can, and after the blueberries are gone raspberries come, and blackberries, and I can sell those; and then I must think of other things to do, for I'll be needing clothes before winter," and he regarded his worn trousers anxiously.

Phinny picked berries steadily until noon, and then ate the luncheon of bread and butter and doughnuts which he had brought with him. He had two tin pails; each one held about six quarts, and one was now nearly full. While Phineas ate his lunch he

looked off toward the thick woods which grew to the edge of the berry pasture, and remembered what Leander had told him about a bear having been seen there, and felt a pleasant little thrill at the thought that bears liked blueberries, and that it was possible that a bear might come out of the woods at any minute. He went down to the brook for a drink of water, leaving his pails under a broad-spreading blueberry bush. While he lay flat on his face drinking from the clear stream he heard a crushing of the undergrowth on the other side of the brook. The boy raised his head and looked, and coming directly toward the brook, walking slowly, and with its head lifted a little as if sniffing the air, was a big, brown shaggy animal.

“A bear!” thought Phineas. He was too much surprised to jump up and run away, but lay very still, and stared directly across the brook toward the bear, which came steadily on, and soon poked its nose into the cool water not more than twenty feet above where Phineas lay.

Bruin did not appear to be in a hurry; he took a good drink and then leisurely made his way back through the underbrush. Phineas thought the bear looked fat and lazy. “I’ll bet I could run the fastest,” thought

the boy, but he lay very still until the last sound of his unexpected visitor had died away. Even then Phinny was a little cautious about getting on his feet, and he walked very softly until he was nearly back to where he had left his pails.

"Gee," he whispered to himself, looking backward toward the brook, "I guess I better go home just as quick as I can." Then he looked at all the ripe berries waiting to be picked, and grew a little more courageous.

"Mrs. Burton said I must decide things myself," he thought; "and I guess that bear won't come up here, anyway not before I can get one pail full;" so Phinny went bravely at work again. Once a rabbit ran through the bushes very near his feet, and Phinny jumped, ready to run. But he filled one pail and had the other a third full before he started for home. On his way home he often looked behind him, and had he not been afraid of spilling the berries he would have run down the slope of the pasture and across the orchard, but he walked as rapidly as he could.

Cathie was at her playhouse under the big tree, and Phineas stopped to show her how many berries he had picked, and to give her a big handful. He did not tell her about the bear.

"I'll get most a dollar for these," he said. "I'm going to take them right over to the village as soon as I have picked them over."

"Oh, Phinny!" said Cathie admiringly, "a whole dollar would be one hundred cents; would you get as much as that?"

"Pretty near," said Phineas.

"My, what will you do with it?"

"Save it for shoes," answered the boy. "Don't you want to come down to the house now and help me pick 'em over?" he continued, for the orchard seemed very near to the woods, and he wanted Cathie safe at home.

"Oh, yes," agreed Cathie, picking up Dinah, and followed by Princess they went toward the house.

"You stay here in the shed with the berries while I go in and get a pan," said Phinny.

"Mrs. Burton," he said in a loud whisper, as he closed the door of the living-room carefully behind him, "I've seen a bear!"

"My soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton.

"Sh——" said Phinny. "I don't want to tell Cathie; but I was getting a drink of water at the brook, and a brown bear came through the bushes just a little way from me, and I kept just as still as I could till he went off."

"Well! and then you ran right straight home?"

"No, ma'am; you see I wanted to pick all the berries I could," said Phinny, as if excusing himself, "so I went back to the pasture and picked till I got one pail full and quite a lot in the other!"

"Well, if that don't beat all," said Mrs. Burton, looking at Phineas.

"I don't s'pose you've got a gun in the house, have you?" questioned Phinny, still in a loud whisper.

"A gun!" Mrs. Burton's voice expressed more fear than she had shown when he had told of seeing the bear. "Phineas, whatever you do, don't you ever touch a gun! I'd be more scared to see you with a gun in your hands than I would to see a bear coming after you full tilt. What we must do is to send word to Mr. Jones, and he'll get some men and go after the poor creature. I hate to set men pursuing a poor dumb brute, but I shouldn't take a mite of peace to have you go after berries in that pasture again."

It did not take Cathie and Phinny very long to pick over the berries. Mrs. Burton said that they would have an early supper so that he would have time to carry them to the village, and by six o'clock Phineas had put on his clean blouse and new straw hat and was ready to start. He could easily get home before dark,

but Mrs. Burton felt a little anxious as she watched him out of sight.

"Phinny's real smart, isn't he, mother?" questioned Cathie, who was standing close beside her.

"Yes, indeed he is," agreed Mrs. Burton.

"Wasn't it lucky he happened to find us?" continued the little girl. "But you don't want him to call you 'mother,' do you?" she added, with a little sorrowful tone in her voice. "I guess Phinny would like to be your truly 'dopted boy."

Mrs. Burton smiled down at the round little face lifted toward her own.

"I shouldn't wonder," she answered. "But you see you are my 'truly adopted girl,' and if Phineas stays with us for a few years he will be big enough to take care of himself, and he won't want anybody to adopt him."

"It's awful nice to 'pretend,'" suggested Cathie. "You and Phinny might pretend that he was your truly boy."

But Mrs. Burton shook her head. "No," she said, "neither Phineas nor I would like that. But I have a nice surprise for Phineas."

"Is it that bundle Miss Pitts sent over by the Jones boy?" questioned Cathie.

"That is just what it is!" said Mrs. Burton. "And what do you suppose is in that bundle?"

"Clothes!" said Cathie, laughing.

"Well! what a girl for guessing," said Mrs. Burton, as if she were very much surprised. "That is just what is in the bundle; and when Phineas gets back we will let him undo it and show us the clothes."

Phineas easily disposed of the blueberries. There were seven quarts, and he came home with the seventy cents. It was the first money he had ever earned. On the way home he took it out of his pocket and counted it several times.

"Now I am going to give you a little box to keep your money in," said Mrs. Burton, when he showed her the seventy cents, and from a drawer in the table she took out a small, square, black box, and handed it to Phinny. There was a tiny key in the lock.

Phineas opened it, and found that the inside was divided into three parts. "I can put pennies in one part, and ten cent pieces in one part, and quarters in one part," said the boy.

"So you can, and you can keep this box in the lower drawer of the bureau in your room. You come right up-stairs with me and I'll show you," said Mrs. Burton, and the two children followed her up the stairs.

On one of the chairs in the spare-room lay a long, flat bundle, neatly wrapped in brown paper. Cathie ran toward it exclaiming: "Oh, Phinny, there is a 'surprise' in this. He is to open it, isn't he, mother?"

Mrs. Burton nodded smilingly.

"For me?" said the boy, a little doubtfully. "I hope it isn't shoes?"

"No," said Mrs. Burton, "it isn't shoes."

Phineas untied the package very carefully. Right on top lay two pairs of heavy long black cotton stockings. Phinny laid these on another chair. Then he took up a blouse of black and white striped percale, with a black silk neck-tie knotted under the collar. And under this was a pair of dark gray knee breeches, and a pair of black knee breeches. At the very bottom were three undervests.

"Don't that beat all!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton. "Eliza must have worked every minute to get these ready. They are a present to you, Phineas, from Miss Pitts; now all you need is a pair of shoes and you can go to Sunday-school with Cathie."

"Yes'm," said Phineas.

"To-morrow we will all step over to the village and you can thank Miss Pitts. You see Miss Pitts and I

are sort of in company about you, Phineas," explained Mrs. Burton.

"I want to go blueberrying to-morrow," said Phinny.

"My soul! blueberrying after seeing that bear!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton, forgetting all about Cathie. "I couldn't let you, Phineas!"

"But the berries ought to be picked right away," urged the boy; "and folks from the village go there and I shan't get any if I don't go this week. I ain't afraid of a bear; I could run the fastest."

"Well, we'll see," said Mrs. Burton. "But I guess I shall go with you if you are set upon going. Here it is eight o'clock, if it's a minute, and you children must go straight to bed. Come, Cathie."

"Did Phinny see a bear?" asked the little girl, as she and Mrs. Burton went to her room.

"Yes, he did. A big brown bear," said Mrs. Burton.

"What is a bear?" asked Cathie. "Is it like Princess, only brown and big?"

"No," said Mrs. Burton, "it is more like Mr. Jones' big Newfoundland dog."

"Why didn't Phinny catch it and bring it home and have it for his dog?" questioned Cathie. "Phinny wants a dog."

"I guess he doesn't want one as big as a bear," said Mrs. Burton.

"I wish I had seen the bear," said Cathie. "I could have patted it, couldn't I, mother?"

"No, indeed, Cathie, a bear is a wild animal, and doesn't know the difference between a little girl and a big fat chicken. And if he saw you he might pick you up in his mouth and carry you off to his den."

"My," said Cathie. "And would there be nice little bears in his den for me to play with? Oh, I do wish I could see a bear," and Cathie's head was on the pillow and her eyes closed, before Mrs. Burton could answer her.

Mrs. Burton went softly down the stairs. "That bear will have to be attended to," she said to herself. "Cathie would run right after it if she should happen to see it, and Phineas seems to have confidence enough to face a dozen bears. I shall step over and tell Mr. Jones about it the first thing to-morrow morning."

CHAPTER XIV

A BROKEN PROMISE

MR. JONES did not seem much surprised when Mrs. Burton told him about the bear.

"Don't you be at all afraid," he said; "almost every summer a bear is seen in the berry pastures near here, but it never comes down near the houses. This is the season when they find all they want to eat in the woods, and I do not believe they would bother to chase a boy."

"But I am afraid Cathie would chase the bear if she happened to see it. She seems to think that it would be a fine thing to have a family of little bears to play with."

Mr. Jones laughed. "Tell her not to go up toward the pastures," he said. "There's no danger of Cathie seeing a bear; and like as not the creature is miles away before this time, and will not be seen in this vicinity before another season."

"But Phinny wants to go right back to that berry pasture this morning!" objected Mrs. Burton.

"Leander can go with him," said Mr. Jones. "He can take my rifle, and they'll be safe enough."

"Mr. Jones! To go and face a bear is danger enough, but to go and face a bear and take a gun along is tempting Providence!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton. "I couldn't agree to that. If you think it safe for Leander and Phineas to go after blueberries, I won't say a word against it, but I can't consent to their taking a gun!"

Mr. Jones explained that Leander had been taught to be very careful in handling a gun, that he was a good shot, and that she need have no fear of an accident, and finally Mrs. Burton agreed that Leander could take his father's rifle when he and Phineas went berrying.

When she returned home Phinny had started the fire, and had set the table for breakfast.

"I have been over and told Mr. Jones about that bear, Phineas," she said. "And now I want you to promise me something."

"Yes'm!"

"Leander Jones is going with you after blueberries, and he is going to take his father's gun."

"Gee," said Phinny, delightedly.

"And I want you to promise me that you won't touch that gun, no matter what happens."

"I guess Len wouldn't let me."

"It doesn't make any difference about that, I don't want you to touch it, and I want you to promise me that you won't."

"All right, I won't touch it, if you don't want me to," said Phineas.

They had hardly finished breakfast when Leander appeared. He had a basket, and he carried his father's rifle. Phinny looked at him admiringly.

"Don't come in, Leander," called Mrs. Burton; "and be just as careful as you can with that gun."

"Yes'm," answered Leander, smilingly. Phinny was soon ready, and the boys started off across the orchard.

"Will they catch a bear?" inquired Cathie.

"Catch a bear!" replied Mrs. Burton. "No, indeed, probably there isn't a bear within ten miles. I guess all the danger they'll see is what they take with them. I do wish," concluded Mrs. Burton firmly, "that guns had never been invented."

On the way to the berry pasture Leander told all about the rifle. Phinny had never seen one before.

"You take aim just this way," explained Leander, and offered to let Phineas take the rifle in his own hands, but Phineas refused.

"Do you suppose we'll see the bear to-day?" questioned Leander.

"Could you shoot it?" responded Phinny.

"I guess I could, if it wasn't too far away. I should aim right at its eyes," said Leander.

"I 'most hope it will come out near to us," said Phinny.

Leander shook his head.

"I don't know about that," he said. "If you wound a bear it's a mighty ugly customer."

"But we could run," said Phinny.

"So can a bear," responded Leander. "And if I fired at it and hurt it, even if we got safe away, it would be pretty hard on the bear to suffer. I should want to kill it if I fired at it."

"Of course," agreed Phinny, soberly.

When they reached the berry bushes Leander carefully placed his gun on a broad high rock near at hand. He told about shooting a number of rabbits the year before, and Phinny listened eagerly. A new ambition had come into his thoughts, to have a gun of his own. But he remembered that there were shoes to buy, and, later on, he would need a coat, so he decided not to think about the gun.

"I wish I had brought my camera," said Leander,

as the two boys picked industriously. "You see we might get a sight of the bear and I might get a picture of it."

"Is a camera a thing that takes pictures?"

"Didn't you ever see a camera?" asked Leander. It seemed to him that an asylum must be a very unhappy place to live if the boys never saw guns or cameras and always had to play in a yard.

"I'll take a picture of you, Phinny," he added; "and I'll show you just how it is done, and you can take a photograph of Cathie and Princess if you want to."

"All right," said Phineas, thinking to himself that Leander was the kindest boy in the world, and resolving to be just like him when he grew up.

"I'm awful thirsty," said Leander. "Guess I'll go down to the brook and get a drink," and off he started. Phinny's thoughts were full of the wonders of a camera. How many new things he was learning, he thought, and how fine it was to stay with Mrs. Burton and have all out-of-doors to play and work in.

He had just gathered all the berries on the bushes around him, and was turning toward another bunch, close beside the flat rock where Leander's rifle lay. As he turned his attention was attracted by a flutter

of white down the slope toward the lower pasture. He looked at it intently for a moment.

"I do believe that's Cathie," he said aloud, and watched until the little figure came out in full sight. It was Cathie. Her leghorn hat flopped about her face, in one hand she carried a small basket; the other arm clasped Dinah closely. As she came nearer she stopped every few steps and looked about and called: "Phinny, Phinny."

As soon as the boy saw her he jumped up on the rocks and waved his arm.

"Right up here, Cathie," he called.

She waved the basket at him in response and began to run toward him. Phinny stood watching her, and as he looked he saw something else which sent a shiver of fear all over him. Between Cathie and Phinny, coming up the slope from the brook, was the big brown bear. Evidently the creature had seen the little girl, but Phinny's shout had attracted its attention and its head was now turned toward the boy. Many things flashed through the boy's mind in a second. He remembered that Mrs. Burton had told him that he must always decide quickly—must think for himself. Cathie was running; if he could not stop her she would come directly upon the bear.

"Cathie," he called, "stop! Don't come another step. Stand still!" For he realized that if the child turned to run the bear would overtake her in a moment.

Cathie stopped short, and the bear, as if surprised, also stopped, with its head lifted and turned toward the rock where Phineas stood.

Phinny stooped and picked up the rifle. He remembered that Leander was at the brook. If the bear should turn now Leander would be in peril.

"Aim at his eyes," he remembered and clumsily lifted the gun and pointed it toward the bear. Twice the boy fired, and then the gun almost fell from his hands. The bear had fallen. It was not dead; Phinny could see the brown mass move convulsively. But as he watched it all movement ceased. In a moment Leander came running toward the rock. The sound of the rifle shots had frightened him. What was Phinny doing with the gun?

"What did you touch that gun for?" he called angrily, and seeing Cathie standing not far off, he called out again, "I'll bet you thought Cathie was a bear! Didn't Mrs. Burton tell you not to touch that gun, and didn't you promise her not to! Is that the way you keep your word?"



Phinny stooped and picked up the rifle

Leander was close to the rock now. "Come on, Cathie," he called. "Phinny won't shoot again. Don't be frightened."

"Where is the bear?" called the little girl, pointing down the slope. Leander's eyes followed her gesture. What was that brown thing lying there?

"I believe there is a bear there," said Leander. "Give me the gun, Phinny."

"I guess it's dead," said Phinny, in a trembling voice.

"Was that what you fired at?" asked Leander. "Whew!"

"I had to," whispered his friend, sitting down on the rock. "It was coming right toward Cathie, and if it went back it would go right toward you."

Cathie had reached the rock and Leander lifted her up beside Phinny. She smiled at the boys happily. "Phinny scared the bear," she remarked.

The children stayed quietly on the rock for what seemed a very long time to Cathie, but Leander said that they must make sure that the bear was dead, as a wounded bear was a very savage beast.

"You and Cathie start for home now," Leander at last suggested, "and tell my father about it, and get him to come right up, and I'll stay here and watch so's to be sure the bear really can't go off."

"All right," said Phinny, and he and Cathie, with many backward looks, started toward home. Phinny could not walk very fast, and he wondered what made him feel so queerly. He did not pay much attention to Cathie's remarks until they reached the orchard.

"What did you come up in the berry pasture for, Cathie?" he asked.

"To find you, Phinny."

"Did Mrs. Burton know it?"

Cathie shook her head. "I didn't tell my mother," she said. "I just walked across the field and up into the pasture and hollered!"

"Well," said Phineas, stopping and looking at her, "don't you ever go anywhere again, Catherine Berry Burton, unless you go and ask your mother if you can. You most got eaten up by a bear, you did, coming way up there alone. And you scared me most to death, and you made me break my promise to Mrs. Burton!"

"What promise?" asked Cathie anxiously.

"Not to touch that gun!" Cathie drew a long breath.

"Oh," she said. "Well, I guess it was real lucky I thought to come, Phinny Trot, for if I hadn't you wouldn't have seen the bear, and like as not it

would have jumped right on you and eaten you up!" and Cathie looked at him triumphantly. The boy made no answer.

"Do you s'pose there are any little bears in the pasture that we could catch?" she continued.

"No," answered Phinny; "and you remember what I tell you, don't you ever go anywhere again unless you ask Mrs. Burton."

"I guess I won't," said Cathie.

He left Cathie at the back door and, without waiting to tell Mrs. Burton of what had happened, ran across the field to Mr. Jones'. Mr. Jones listened in astonishment, and calling to his hired man told him that Phinny had shot a bear.

"What are you going to do with it?" asked Mr. Jones as they hurried up to where Leander was standing guard.

"I don't know," said Phinny.

"Well," said Mr. Jones, "there's a good deal of value in a bear at this season. They are apt to be fat and in good condition; bear's steak is good eating, and their skin is of value. I'll buy your bear, Phinny."

"Is it my bear?" asked Phinny.

"Of course it is. You shot it, and you showed a good deal of the right sort of courage in shooting just

when you did," said Mr. Jones. "I'll give you twenty dollars for your bear." Phinny's eyes opened in amazement. The nervous trembling left him. Twenty dollars!

"All right, sir," he said.

Leander began to holloa to them as soon as they came in sight.

"The bear is dead fast enough," he called. "Say, wasn't that a great shot of Phinny's, father!"

"I should say it was," replied Mr. Jones. "I guess Phinny will have to invest in a gun of his own."

CHAPTER XV

MISS PITTS' PICNIC

ON the river road, a short distance beyond Mrs. Burton's, was a place called Beech Point. The point of land extended into the river and several large beech trees grew there. It was just a pleasant walk across the fields from Mrs. Burton's.

Every year it had been Miss Pitts' custom to put up a basket of lunch, and, after persuading Mrs. Burton that she really needed a day's outing, the two would walk down to the point and stay the greater part of the day. This year Miss Pitts had decided to ask the Jones family and Mr. Goddard to join them. "It will be more pleasant for Cathie and Phineas," she said, in telling Mrs. Burton of her plan. The day decided on was the very next day after Phineas' adventure with the bear, and as the little party walked toward the point Phineas kept close beside Mr. Goddard, and was unusually quiet, although Len and Mr. Jones had a good deal to say in regard to the good shot and Phineas' courage.

Len had a boat at Beech Point. It was one that he

had made himself, with some little assistance from his father. It was made of an old cedar log. Len had hollowed out the log as much as he could with an axe and a hatchet, then he had made a fire in it and burned it out until only a shell remained. He had made a very good paddle of ash, and although it was a rough looking boat, and easily upset, Len was very proud of it and had promised Phineas that they would go fishing in it.

"To-day will be a fine time to go," Len said, when the party had reached the shade of the beech trees and the two boys had gone down to the shore to look at the boat. "I dug some worms this morning for bait," he continued, displaying a tin mustard box with holes punched in the cover.

"What is 'bait'?" asked Cathie, who had kept close to Phineas.

Len looked at her in surprise. "Didn't you ever go fishing?" he asked.

"No," said Cathie. "Are you going to take me out in that nice boat?"

Len looked pleased at the praise of his boat, but shook his head.

"Bait is what you catch fish with," he explained, in answer to her first question.

While the children were admiring the boat the elder members of the party were preparing luncheon, and Cathie, after watching the boys start out in the boat, ran up the bank and tried to help Miss Pitts spread out the sandwiches, and cakes, and other goodies from the baskets. Luncheon was all ready when a call from Len made them all look toward the river. The boys were coming up the bank and Phineas was holding a long, squirming fish in his hand.

"Oh, it's a snake!" called out Miss Pitts.

"No, it's an eel," said Phinny; "and I caught it. It pulled real hard."

Mr. Goddard examined the fish curiously. "It's a good fat one," he said. "And if you'll wait a little for lunch I'll skin it and broil it over the fire."

They all decided to wait for the eel, so Mr. Goddard and the boys went back to the shore to prepare it. Phineas and Len were sure that eel would be much better eating than sandwiches.

"You wouldn't think that this was a salt-water fish, would you, boys?" said Mr. Goddard; "but it is. Perhaps this very fish has journeyed hundreds of miles. It probably came up the Kennebec River from Bath, and found its way into Sandy River last spring. Then it kept on, perhaps up to

East Pond, where it has fed all summer, and was on its way back to the sea when Phineas caught it."

After skinning the eel Mr. Goddard cut it in pieces about three inches long, and broiled them by fastening them on a stick suspended over the fire which the boys had made. Len brought some pieces of clean birch-bark for plates, and carried the fish up to where the luncheon was spread.

They all tasted of it except Miss Pitts, who said that she knew exactly how it tasted.

"What does it taste like?" asked Phineas.

"It tastes just as the muddy bottom of a lake smells," said Miss Pitts. "And any one who wants my portion can have it."

But the fish was white and firm and the boys said it was the best part of the luncheon.

"I don't know when I've enjoyed a summer as much as I have this one," said Mrs. Burton, as they all sat beneath the big trees and looked down the river. "I've been real busy, but it seems to me as if I had taken more comfort than usual."

Miss Pitts nodded. "Well, I was thinking of that very thing," she said, looking toward Cathie and Phineas, whom Len was showing how to make birch-bark baskets; "and I believe it's because of those

children. If I had known there were children like those in orphan asylums I should have picked one out years ago."

"Well, I didn't have that trouble," said Mrs. Burton. "Cathie and Phineas seemed to pick me out; but I don't know as I could have suited myself any better, although I must say that I'm considerably worried since Phineas fired off the gun and killed the bear. I suppose the next thing is that he'll want a gun of his own, and to go chasing off in the woods with the Jones boy," and Mrs. Burton took off her glasses and wiped them vigorously.

"I should be more afraid of this boat of Len's," said Miss Pitts. "It will tip over if you look at it."

"I don't worry about that," replied Mrs. Burton. "I guess Phineas could walk ashore if they did get upset; the river's real shallow along here."

While their elders were talking the children had gone back to the shore. "I never was in a boat in my life," said Cathie, looking longingly toward the river.

"Couldn't we take her out a little way, Len?" asked Phineas. "She would sit just as still, wouldn't you, Cathie?"

Cathie nodded.

"I'd just as soon take her," said Len. "You sit in

the bow, Phin, to balance the boat, and Cathie in the stern, and I'll paddle."

"Oh," said Cathie, as the boys pushed the boat into the water and helped her in. "I think this is the nicest part of the whole picnic, don't you, Phinny? I think it's nicer than killing a great big bear." The boys both laughed, and cautioning her to sit very quietly Len paddled out into the stream. The water was shallow and there was but little current; Cathie felt that it was very hard to have to sit so still when the water was rippling so quietly and she longed to put her hand in it. But all would have gone well had not a long, silvery strip of birch-bark come floating down the stream close to the canoe. "Oh!" exclaimed the little girl, and, forgetting all about Len's cautions to sit perfectly quiet, she reached quickly toward the floating bark.

The boat lurched with her motion and in an instant had turned over, spilling the children out into the water. Cathie's shrieks of fright made Len laugh, even in his vexation at having the boat upset.

He picked her out of the water and waded quickly ashore with her, setting her down somewhat forcibly on the soft grass. Her cries had brought all the others to the shore, and for a few minutes Miss Pitts and

Mrs. Burton were so busy wringing out Catherine's wet skirts and endeavoring to quiet her that no thought was given to the boat.

"My soul!" exclaimed Mrs. Burton, looking anxiously toward the river. "Where is Phineas?"

"Why, I supposed he waded right ashore," answered Len. "Cathie made such a fuss that I forgot all about the boat and everything else."

"The boat must have drifted beyond the point," said Mr. Jones. "Perhaps Phineas waded ashore further down." The men started along the shore calling, "Phineas, Phineas," and in a few moments their anxiety was relieved by hearing an answering call, and as they reached the other side of the point they saw the canoe, and Phinny paddling it bravely up the stream.

"I knew Len wouldn't want his boat to drift down stream," he said, as Mr. Goddard helped him pull it ashore.

"I guess you'd better run for home, Phineas," said Mr. Goddard, "and get off those wet clothes."

"Well," exclaimed Mrs. Burton, as Phinny's dripping figure came in sight, "if this don't beat all. What with killing a bear one day and getting spilled into the river the next, it looks to me as if bringing

up a boy was almost more than I was equal to." Miss Pitts was already hurrying Cathie toward home, and Mrs. Burton and Phineas followed them.

"Didn't you want me to go out in the boat?" asked Phinny, looking up wistfully at Mrs. Burton.

"I guess there wasn't any harm in going out in the boat, Phineas," she replied. "But why didn't you think about yourself and come straight ashore? I was real worried about you. Len's boat wasn't of any account if you only got ashore safely."

A smile came over the boy's face. "If you don't care I don't mind about anything else," he said, "only I thought I ought to save Len's boat because I asked him to take us out."

Mrs. Burton smiled back at the boy.

"I guess you plan to do about right, don't you, Phineas?" she said. "Now you run just as fast as you can, so you won't get a chill. You're as wet as that eel."

CHAPTER XVI

A DAY OF TROUBLE

THE day after the picnic Miss Pitts came over to see how the children were after their wetting.

"What did Phineas say when he told you about killing that bear?" she asked, after Mrs. Burton had told her that Cathie and Phineas were none the worse for their drop into the river.

"He hasn't told me. The Jones family have all taken a turn in describing the scene, saying Phineas saved Cathie's life, and Leander's life, and his own life, and most everybody's except the bear's, but Phineas acts ashamed about it," and a little smile came to Mrs. Burton's pleasant face.

"Ashamed! The idea! I should think he'd be proud of it. I tell you what, Mrs. Burton, there are not many boys that would have presence of mind enough to decide right off in a second what to do, or courage enough to do it, with a big bear looming right up in front of them!"

"I told Phineas the first day he was here that I wanted he should decide things right off, and that he'd have to take a hand in bringing himself up, and

he seems to be doing real well," rejoined Mrs. Burton ; "but he has disobeyed me once and broken his promise to me."

"What about ?"

"Well, I told him not to touch Leander's gun, no matter what happened, and he said he wouldn't."

"Oh," Miss Pitts seemed greatly relieved at hearing this. "I guess he did just as you would have him," she said.

"Yes, I guess he did, Eliza. He saw what there was to do and he did it, but now that it's all over he is remembering about his promise to me. He is dreadful conscientious, Phineas is."

"He is a remarkable boy," said Miss Pitts firmly. "If I had realized just what kind of a boy Phineas was," she continued, "when Cathie was asking me to adopt him, I guess I should have decided differently."

Mrs. Burton rocked comfortably back and forth, but made no response.

"Mr. Goddard was speaking to me about Phineas this morning," went on Miss Pitts. "He said that he should be glad to take him, but that the boy seemed to think that he ought to stay with you and Cathie."

Mrs. Burton smiled again. "Mr. Goddard didn't want to adopt Phineas," she said.

"Not then, he didn't," rejoined Miss Pitts.

Mrs. Burton stopped rocking. "My soul, Eliza! What do you mean?" she asked.

"I mean that Mr. Goddard has pretty near made up his mind to adopt Phineas, to take out legal papers and give him his name."

"Hasn't he got to get my consent, and Phinny's, too?" questioned Mrs. Burton.

"I don't know a thing about the law side of it," replied Miss Pitts; "but I do know that Mr. Goddard could do real well by Phineas. He's a man of education, and he'd bring him up well, send him to college, like as not, and perhaps make a minister of him. And it seems to me, being as you and I formed a sort of partnership about bringing the boy up, that I ought to tell you about what a good chance there is waiting for him."

"Yes," said Mrs. Burton, beginning to rock, "it does sound well, and of course I know that Mr. Goddard would do well by Phineas."

"I recall your saying that you didn't know as you could really afford to bring Cathie up," said Miss Pitts. "Are her adoption papers signed yet?"

Miss Burton shook her head.

"Well, now, Mrs. Burton, I know just how you feel

about Cathie, and how she feels about you, but she's so young she'd learn to love anybody who was kind to her, and I'm going to say what I said before, that I'll take Cathie right off your hands and adopt her and bring her up, and Mr. Goddard will do the same by Phineas, and then you won't have any more anxiety about either of them, and you can settle right back into your old ways and be as happy as can be!" and Miss Pitts smiled at her friend.

"If ever I see the beat," murmured Mrs. Burton.

"You needn't decide right now," continued Miss Pitts; "but you talk it over with the children and see what they have to say about it. Mr. Goddard will know just how to deal with a boy, about guns, you know, and things that would trouble you."

"Phineas seems to know how to deal with those things himself," said Mrs. Burton.

"So he does! Now I'm sure you understand that I want to do right, don't you, Mrs. Burton, and I want to help you carry your burdens, just as a friend should."

Mrs. Burton nodded. "Not that I feel those children to be a burden, Eliza, and I guess I might as well say right now that I can't give up Cathie, there's no use in talking about it; I shall keep Cathie; and as for

those adoption papers, I'll have them signed right off."

Miss Pitts' hopeful smile faded. "Well, I will own I'm disappointed," she said. "I'd like nothing better than to have Cathie live with me, but you're the one to say. But so far as Phineas goes he's dreadful anxious to be adopted. Cathie says he is, and of course he realizes that you are just keeping him out of pity, not for love, and if he knows that Mr. Goddard will really adopt him as his son, Phinny will probably want to go and live with him."

"I'll tell him," said Mrs. Burton.

Miss Pitts went out the side door and across the yard to the garden. Both the children smiled when they saw her coming.

"You'd better step up to the house, Phineas," she said. "Mrs. Burton wants to talk with you. She is real pleased to think you were so brave," she added.

"I'll walk down to the gate with you," said Cathie, as Phineas hurried toward the house.

Whatever Mrs. Burton had to say did not take much time, for in a few minutes he came running back to the garden with a cooky in his hand and a smile on his face. Mrs. Burton followed him as far as the door and watched him with affectionate pride.

"I guess I'll step down cellar and bring up a jar of those preserved pears," she said aloud as she turned away from the door.

Mrs. Burton's cellar stairs had often been a trouble to her. They were only a rough set of steps, and one or two were not very firmly set. Usually Mrs. Burton remembered the weak places, but this afternoon her mind was full of the happenings of the day, of Phinny's courage, and of Mr. Goddard's interest in the boy. She had called Phinny in, not to tell him about Mr. Goddard, but to tell him that she understood all about his feeling in regard to the gun. "Some promises are better broken than kept, Phineas," she had said; "and I'm glad that you have mind enough to know it."

"I didn't think about my promise."

"Of course you didn't! It wasn't any time to remember it," Mrs. Burton had assured him.

She was thinking of this conversation as she went down the rickety stairs more briskly than usual. She had nearly reached the bottom when a loose step tilted and, though Mrs. Burton made a desperate effort to regain her balance, she lurched forward and fell in a heap on the cellar floor. When she tried to stand she found that she could not. Her right ankle would not

support her, and was evidently badly sprained. Slowly she dragged herself up the stairs to the kitchen.

"Phineas, Phineas!" she called. The boy heard her and came running in.

"Oh, what is it?" he exclaimed, seeing her sitting in the cellar-way and leaning against the kitchen door.

"I guess I've sprained my ankle," groaned Mrs. Burton.

"Those cellar stairs!" said Phineas fiercely. "Shall I run right after the doctor?"

"Doctor? well I guess not; you just shove that big rocking-chair over here."

Phineas obeyed, and with his help Mrs. Burton managed to get into it. He then placed another chair in front of her and lifted her feet so that they rested upon it.

"You start up the kitchen fire, Phinny, and heat a kettle of water. As soon as it's hot you bring my foot-tub out of my bedroom and I'll get my foot into hot water and have you bathe it for me. This isn't the first sprained ankle I've had to deal with. You unlace that right shoe first. Oh, dear!" and with a groan of pain Mrs. Burton leaned back in the big chair.

"I'll fix those stairs to-morrow," said Phinny, wiping his eyes on the sleeve of his blouse.

"Never mind about the stairs, you get some hot water just as quick as you can," said Mrs. Burton.

In a few minutes the hot water was ready and Phineas began to bathe the sprained ankle.

"You keep the teakettle full, Phinny," directed Mrs. Burton; "and you remember what I say, that there's nothing will help a sprained ankle like hot water."

For over an hour Mrs. Burton continued the hot applications, then under her directions the ankle and foot were bandaged.

"After supper we'll deal with it again," she said, cheerfully. "I can see that it isn't going to be a bad sprain; but you will have to get supper, Phineas; it's near sunset now."

Cathie's bright face grew very sober when she came running in and saw Mrs. Burton sitting in one chair with her feet resting in another.

"Oh! but wasn't it lucky that Phinny was right here!" she said. "Just think—if he hadn't been here!"

"I guess Phineas has had a pretty active day," rejoined Mrs. Burton. "Now you must help him get supper."

"Oh, yes, we can pretend that we are grown up, can't we, Phinny; and that you are my truly brother."

Phineas moved the kitchen table up beside Mrs. Burton's rocking-chair, and Cathie spread the white tablecloth over it, and the two children soon had supper ready.

"Now, Cathie, you clear away the tea things and Phineas will have to bring me more hot water for this ankle of mine." For another hour Mrs. Burton and Phineas took turns in bathing the ankle, then, with the children's help, and with a big cane which had belonged to her father, Mrs. Burton hobbled into her bedroom, and to bed.

"I guess, Phineas, you can just bring down a pillow and blanket and sleep on the lounge in the sitting-room," she said. "If this ankle gets to aching in the night I'll have to have more hot water."

Cathie wanted to sleep down-stairs also, and curling up beside her mother on the wide bed, was soon fast asleep.

But Phineas lay on the lounge under his blanket and thought about the bear. "I guess I don't want ever to see a bear again," he decided. Then he remembered the twenty dollars Mr. Jones had promised him. "I'll give that to Mrs. Burton," he thought. "I

guess if I had a truly mother she would be just like Mrs. Burton." He thought about the rickety stairs, and resolved to work on them the very next day. "I must help her all I can, even if I ain't adopted," he resolved.

CHAPTER XVII

MRS. BURTON HEARS ABOUT RELATIVES

THE blueberry season was over before Mrs. Burton's ankle was strong enough for her to do the usual work of the house. The children had taken the best of care of her, and she declared to Miss Pitts that Phineas was as good as a girl.

"What I should have done without him I don't know," she said. "The way he would think of things to do to save me steps, and does now, for that matter. And he fixed those cellar stairs as well as a man could have done it, and he is as watchful of me now as if I was his own mother."

"I suppose he will be going to school soon," rejoined Miss Pitts. "Two weeks from Monday school begins."

"I suppose so," agreed Mrs. Burton with a sigh. "And Eliza, if my hay money doesn't come in I shall have to get in debt to get Phineas shoes. Someway my money hasn't held out as well as usual."

"No wonder!" said Miss Pitts. "You have spent a

sight of money on Cathie; she has had three muslin dresses for one thing."

"She deserves everything I can do for her," said Mrs. Burton. "She is just as thoughtful as she can be. Why, she has begun to knit Phineas a pair of mittens already!"

"Has she?" said Miss Pitts, admiringly. "Well, now don't you worry about shoes for Phineas; he'll find a way to get his own shoes."

Mrs. Burton shook her head. "He hasn't had a chance to pick any berries to sell since he killed the bear. You see he has had to wait and tend on me, and with the garden to look after and the chores to do he has been kept busy."

"Who had the bear?" inquired Miss Pitts.

"Well, Eliza, Mr. Jones took possession of the animal. Of course it was killed in his pasture, and it was his gun that Phineas fired, but don't it look to you as if that bear, or the worth of it, belonged to Phineas?"

"Certain!" replied Miss Pitts. "Of course it does. Didn't Mr. Jones make some sort of an agreement with Phineas about it?"

"If he has Phineas hasn't mentioned it to me," said Mrs. Burton.

"I suppose Mr. Goddard has been over and told you about his trip to Boston last week and going to that asylum, hasn't he?"

"My soul, no! What sent him journeying off to that asylum, I should like to know?"

"Well, he said that, feeling the interest he did in Phineas, he wanted to find out what kind of folks he sprung from; so as he was in Boston he went to the asylum and had a talk with Miss Gilman and looked over the records and found out all about Phinny. I suppose you asked all about Cathie, didn't you?"

"Yes," nodded Mrs. Burton. "Poor child, there wasn't much to tell. Her father and mother died when she was a little baby, and there wasn't anybody to look after her."

"Well, it wasn't so with Phineas," said Miss Pitts. "There were folks whose duty it was to come right forward and take Phineas and do well by him. His father died first, it seems, and then when Phinny was about two years old his poor mother was taken. Miss Gilman said that the asylum folks knew all about her, that she came from some place near Portland, Maine, and that her maiden name was Higgins."

"My soul," said Mrs. Burton softly.

"Well, the Higginses were written to and sent for,

and not one of them would lift a hand for the poor child. They left him to the asylum folks. Mr. Goddard said that the records proved that Phineas' father and mother both were good people. He seemed real pleased about it."

"What for?" asked Mrs. Burton.

"Well, you know that idea of adopting Phinny makes Mr. Goddard want to find out all he can about him."

"Mr. Goddard didn't happen to mention if Phineas' mother's name was Amanda, did he?" asked Mrs. Burton.

"Why, Mrs. Burton, you never told me that you knew about Phinny's family! Yes, he did say that her name was Amanda."

"Amanda Higgins, daughter of James and Abitha Higgins of Leeport," said Mrs. Burton thoughtfully.

Miss Pitts beamed upon her friend admiringly. "To think that you knew all about the boy and never said a word!" she said.

"I know all about the Higgins family," rejoined her friend, with emphasis; "and I guess Amanda must have been different from the rest of her folks. You just ask Mr. Goddard to step over and see me some day soon."

"Yes, I will," agreed Miss Pitts; "and I wanted to tell you that I have ripped up father's gray melton overcoat, and sponged and pressed it, and I can get Phineas a real nice overcoat out of it."

"Well, Eliza, that will be a help."

"Of course he will have to have a cap; but I guess we can manage," said Miss Pitts smilingly; "and when the weather begins to get cool Cathie and Phinny must have their lunch with me. They can run right across from the schoolhouse, and I should like to have them."

"You're real good, Eliza, and I'll be real glad to have them have a good warm lunch."

"You know this is a sort of a partnership family, even if you won't let Cathie live with me," said Miss Pitts, smilingly.

"Do you know, Eliza, I have a great mind to adopt you, too," said Mrs. Burton, with a little laugh. "Phineas wants me to let him have the shed chamber for his room, and I guess he would enjoy it better, and there would be my spare-room all ready for you."

"I should like it," replied Miss Pitts seriously; "and if you really mean it, why, another spring I'll sell my shop out to the Simpson girls—they have been wanting me to for some time—and move right over

here. I could share expenses and do my part of the work."

"That would be complete," agreed Mrs. Burton. "I'll own up that since the children came ways and means have troubled me considerably, and I should enjoy your company, Eliza," she added.

Mr. Jones had paid Phineas the twenty dollars, and the boy had put it carefully away in his box. Cathie had told him that the first day of September was Mrs. Burton's birthday, and he had resolved that he would make her a birthday present of the twenty dollars.

"I wish I could make her a present," Cathie had said wistfully.

"You can," Phineas replied. "You can give her that bead picture of a house."

"Oh, so I can! Oh, Phinny, wasn't it lucky that you happened to think of it? It is all finished except sewing the beads on the roof. But it ought to be framed!" she added. "Miss Pitts said that it ought to have glass over it and a frame."

"We'll make a frame," said Phinny, courageously. "I guess glass doesn't matter much, and we can get some pretty alder sticks and cross the ends and make a nice frame. I'll show you."

"Oh, will you, Phinny? Wouldn't it be nice if we

could have a birthday party for my mother?" said Cathie.

"We don't know anybody to ask to it," rejoined Phinny.

"Oh, yes we do; we could ask Leander, and Mr. Goddard and Miss Pitts."

"But what do they do at parties?" questioned Phineas.

"Everybody is all dressed up," replied Catherine soberly; "and they make presents and eat cake."

"All right," said Phinny; "let's have a party."

"But it must be a surprise. My mother mustn't know it's a party until it begins."

"All right," said Phineas. "I'll tell Leander."

"And we will go together to tell Miss Pitts and Mr. Goddard," said Cathie.

"Well, children," said Mrs. Burton that night, as they sat down to the supper table, "I wonder if you would like to go to a fair? Mr. Goddard has been here this afternoon and invited us to go over to Starks to-morrow. Mr. Jones is going to hitch up his pair of horses and drive us over, and Mrs. Jones and Leander are going, and Miss Pitts and the Burton family."

"Is it a long way?" asked Cathie.

"It is just six miles," said Mrs. Burton. "There is going to be a fair over there to-morrow and Mr. Goddard thought we would all enjoy going. It's just like the Starks folks to have a fair in August. But I suppose they have it to amuse the summer visitors," she concluded.

Phinny's eyes began to sparkle. "I think it's a real good plan," he said, "to have it before school begins. Len was telling me about the games, and he says that generally there's a baseball match between the Starks boys and the Junction boys."

"I guess there is," said Mrs. Burton; "but to tell the truth I haven't been to a fair for years. Mr. Goddard said that we'd make an early start, so you children must go to bed in good season to-night."

The next morning was clear and pleasant, and Cathie in her blue muslin dress and best hat was waiting at the gate when Mr. Jones and the big three-seated wagon, drawn by the brown horses, came in sight. Mrs. Burton and Phinny brought out the lunch basket, and Leander packed it carefully away under the middle seat. Mr. Goddard and Miss Pitts were waiting, and they were soon on the road leading to Starks.

"I think we had better ford the river near the

Bunker place," said Mr. Jones. "There are not so many rocks there as further down."

The fording place was not very deep, the steady horses were not frightened, and when they drove up the opposite bank Mr. Goddard said, "Now we are in Starks."

"Where is the fair?" asked Cathie, eagerly.

"Oh, the fair is over at the village, near the school-house," answered Mr. Goddard.

"I guess it isn't all there yet," said Phinny, as they passed a man driving a pair of steers, and right behind him was a boy leading a colt.

All along the road they now overtook people bound for the fair; some were walking, some riding behind oxen or farm-horses, and occasionally a speedy horse attached to a shining wagon and driven by a brisk young farmer would dash past. As soon as they arrived at the village square Mr. Jones found a place to put up his horses, and drew the wagon under the shade of a big oak-tree near the schoolhouse. Mr. Jones, Phineas, Leander and Mr. Goddard went in search of the baseball game, while Mrs. Burton, Miss Pitts, Mrs. Jones and Cathie went into the school-house to look at the array of patchwork quilts, knit

bedspreads, cakes and preserves, that were displayed on long tables waiting for the prizes to be awarded.

Cathie kept a tight hold on Miss Pitts' hand, and looked admiringly at several quilts which had been made by little girls.

"Just look at this, Cathie," said Mrs. Burton, pointing out a quilt made in a star pattern of pieces of yellow and white calico. "This was made by a little girl just your age."

"Can't I make one?" asked Cathie.

Mrs. Burton nodded. "Yes, indeed you can. I'll cut you out some squares so you can have them to work on rainy Saturdays."

"Perhaps I'd get a prize for it at the fair next year," suggested Cathie.

"I shouldn't wonder," said Miss Pitts.

"Oh, what are they chasing that poor pig for?" exclaimed Cathie. They had left the schoolhouse, and were now standing on the steps, and in the small field directly in front of the building a pig was running wildly about pursued by several young men.

"That is the greased pig race," explained Mr. Goddard, who had come up the steps and stood beside them. "The fellow who catches the pig has it for keeps."

The frightened little animal now dashed through a crowd of spectators, and into a growth of underbrush which bordered the enclosure, and disappeared from sight.

"They won't get him at all now," called out a man.

"I hope they won't," said Mr. Goddard. "Poor little creature."

Len and Phinny now came running toward the steps. "Oh, you must come and see the potato race," said Len. "Father is keeping a place for us," and he hurried them toward the other side of the building. A man was walking along with a basket of potatoes, dropping them at irregular distances.

Four men, bareheaded, and without their coats, stood in a line waiting. After the man had dropped all the potatoes he came back to where the runners were lined up. "One, two, three!" he called, and away started the men, running as rapidly as possible, and stopping to pick up every potato they came across, dropping them into bags suspended from their shoulders. Before the race was finished every one of the contestants had had one or more tumbles. The winner reached the goal dusty and tired, but ready to laugh at his own mishaps.

After this the crowd began to disappear, and Mr.

Jones hitched up the big horses and the little party started for home.

"I don't know when I've had such a good time," said Mrs. Burton, as they drove swiftly along. "I declare I believe it does any one good to take a day off now and then."

"Of course it does," said Mr. Goddard. "We'll go next year."

"It's the best time I ever had," said Cathie, snuggling close to Mrs. Burton, and thinking about the wonderful star quilt, and about the surprise party for her mother's birthday.

CHAPTER XVIII

MRS. BURTON'S SURPRISE

"WOULDN'T it have been nice if Phinny could have caught a little bear?" said Cathie the morning after the ride to Starks, as she and Mrs. Burton were gathering sage in the garden.

"What would Phineas want of a little bear?" questioned Mrs. Burton.

"Oh, if he had caught one we could all pretend that it was a dog, and we could have taught it things, and it would have been most as good as a dog."

"Does Phineas want a dog?"

"Well, he likes Princess, but he thinks dogs are more useful than cats," explained Cathie. "He says Leander's dog is a fine watch-dog, and that if we had a dog it would keep away foxes so they wouldn't catch our chickens!"

Mrs. Burton laughed. "But I never knew of a fox to come near here," she said.

"He says a dog is a lot of company," persisted Cathie. "Leander knows of a man that wants to find a home for a nice puppy." Mrs. Burton laughed again.

"Now you run and call Phineas," she said, "and take this sage and a basket of eggs over to Miss Pitts."

"Yes'm," said Cathie, and in a few minutes the children were walking toward the village.

Mrs. Burton stood at the gate and watched them.

"And to think that I never suspected that boy of being related to the Higginses," she said. "I did have an idea that Cathie might belong to the family, but I hadn't a suspicion of Phineas!"

"To-day's Thursday," said Phineas, "and I s'pose we had better ask Mr. Goddard and Miss Pitts to the party. Saturday is the first day of September."

Cathie nodded. "And school begins a week from Monday," she responded.

"Yes," said the boy, "and if I get seventy cents for these raspberries I'll have most enough for my shoes. Leander says good ones will cost about two dollars. Say, Cathie, Leander says he's got a present for Mrs. Burton, too."

"My, what is it?"

"He won't tell; but he says he knows she will be real pleased. I s'pose we had better stop and ask Mr. Goddard now, hadn't we?"

Cathie agreed, and the two children turned in at



Mr. Goddard came out to speak to them

the driveway leading to the large white house where the minister lived. "I should think he'd be awful lonesome," said Cathie, "without any mother or any little girls and boys."

"He's got a housekeeper," said Phineas, "and he's got a room with shelves all around it and the shelves are all filled with books; I saw them the day he bought some blueberries."

"I wonder if he would have adopted me if I had asked him to," Cathie said. "I did ask him about you, but he said 'No,' right off."

"I'm glad he did," said Phinny.

By this time the children were near the door, and Mr. Goddard came out to speak to them.

"More berries to sell, my boy?" he said with a pleasant smile. "Well, I'll be glad to take them; you just wait here until I carry them to the kitchen." In a moment he was back, and slipped a shining silver dollar into Phineas' hand.

"We came to ask you to come over to my house Saturday afternoon to my mother's birthday party," said Cathie. "It is to be a s'prise to her," she added.

"And we are going to give her presents," said Phinnie; "and so is Leander Jones."

"That's a fine idea," responded Mr. Goddard.

"Now I should like to give her a present, too ; perhaps you can tell me of something that she would like to have ? "

"I know," said Cathie, eagerly. "She wants a cow. She said she had a barn, and she had hay, and hadn't any cow. She said that a cow would be half our living."

Mr. Goddard looked smilingly down into the little girl's eager face.

"Why," he said, "now I think that it is very fortunate that Mrs. Burton should want a cow, for I have a nice red and white Jersey which I want to find a home for ; so I will have it sent over to your house in time for the party."

"Gee," said Phineas, half under his breath.

"Can you take care of a cow, my boy ? " the minister asked, putting a hand on the boy's shoulder and looking at him with friendly eyes.

"I can learn, sir," responded Phineas.

"That's right ! " said Mr. Goddard heartily.

When the children reached Miss Pitts' shop and told her about the party, and of Mr. Goddard's present, she was as pleased as they were.

"Poor man," she said. "I hear that his house-keeper is going to leave and that he is talking of rent-

ing his house, so I guess he will be pleased to find a home for the cow; but it's a handsome present. Can't you think of something for me to give her?"

"I s'pose we ought to have a cake for a birthday party," said Catherine.

"Of course we had!" agreed Miss Pitts, "and I'll make as nice a cake as I can, and that shall be my present."

"Doesn't everything happen just right?" said Cathie, as the two children started for home. "And won't my mother be surprised with so many nice presents? I wish she was your mother, too, Phinny."

"I like her just as well as you do," responded the boy, "and I'm going to earn money and buy her a horse."

"Oh, Phinny, when are you going to buy it?" exclaimed the little girl.

"When I get big enough to earn a lot of money."

"Oh," said Cathie, in rather a despondent tone. She had hoped that the horse was to be a birthday present also.

"Do you know what a quilting is, Phinny?" she asked.

The boy shook his head.

"Well, I do, and Mrs. Jones is going to have one,"

said Cathie. "She has asked my mother and Miss Pitts, and you and I and Mr. Goddard are to come to tea."

"When is she going to have it?"

"To-morrow, and my mother says that perhaps, she isn't sure, but she thinks, perhaps, Mrs. Jones will let me quilt a little."

"Can I see how they do it?" questioned Phineas.

Cathie nodded. "My mother is to 'mark off,'" she said.

"What's that?" questioned Phineas.

"You'll see to-morrow," answered Cathie.

Early the next afternoon the quilting party were gathered in Mrs. Jones's pleasant sitting-room, and Cathie and Phineas stood near the open door watching Mrs. Burton with great interest.

"As long as it is a star quilt," said Mrs. Burton, "I think the diamond pattern will be the best." Mrs. Jones handed her a piece of blue chalk, and a ball of twine, and Mrs. Burton chalked the twine carefully. "I guess Phinny can help me 'mark off,'" she said, smiling at the boy. "You just stand right over there, Phineas, and hold this twine close down to the quilt, and hold it steady."

"Yes'm," said Phineas. Then Mrs. Burton drew the chalked twine as closely to the quilt as possible, and holding it firmly down with one hand lifted the cord with the other and let it snap back, leaving a distinct blue line, along which the quilters would set their neat stitches. In a short time the quilt was marked off in diamond-shaped lines and the quilters were ready to begin work. Phineas and Len disappeared, but Cathie, greatly to her satisfaction, was given a seat beside Miss Pitts, and allowed to set a row of stitches along the blue chalk line.

"I declare I didn't know as I should ever get a chance at a quilt again," said Miss Pitts. "Why, twenty years ago I came over here to a quilting in this very room. It was in the winter time, and going home in the evening our horse got frightened at some foolish thing, and we were all spilled out into the softest snowbank you ever saw," and she laughed at the remembrance. "But the horse set forth for home at such a pace that none of us could catch him, and father and mother and I had to walk every step of the way. Over a mile it was, too, and the road not very well broken out, at that."

Mrs. Burton stopped work and looked toward her

friend. "Now, I never heard about that before," she said, "and I was here at that very quilting."

"Well, it's old news now," said Miss Pitts. "I recall it well enough. I spoiled my best shoes."

"Now, Cathie," said Mrs. Jones, "I want you to remember your first quilting, so I have a little present for you, something you can keep a good while. Shut your eyes tight."

As Cathie shut her eyes she felt something slip over her head, and when Mrs. Jones said, "Now you can open your eyes," she looked down and there around her neck was the dearest little gold chain with a tiny heart on it.

"Oh," said Cathie, "is that for my very own, to keep?"

"Yes, indeed," said Mrs. Jones. "It was given to me when I was a little girl, and I think I have been keeping it for you."

"I think quiltings are lovely," said Cathie, after she had thanked Mrs. Jones. "I'll always remember about this one."

As Phinny and Cathie walked home from the quilting the boy said: "Oh, Len says he has the nicest present for Mrs. Burton."

"As nice as a cow?" questioned Cathie.

"A lot nicer, Len says," he answered; "but he won't tell me what it is."

* * * * *

"Well, children, this is my birthday," said Mrs. Burton on Saturday morning, "and I thought we would have a little celebration in honor of it, so I am going to have a party."

"Oh!" exclaimed Cathie and Phineas in such tones of surprise that Mrs. Burton laughed heartily.

"Didn't you ever hear of a birthday party?" she asked. "Well, mine won't be a very large one. I have only asked Mr. and Mrs. Jones and Leander and Miss Pitts and the minister to come over this afternoon and take tea with us."

"Oh, we were going to give you a s'prise, and we had asked them too," said Cathie.

"Well," replied Mrs. Burton, "now we are all surprised together," but she looked at them affectionately and thought what good children they were.

"But we each have a present for you," said Cathie; "shall we give them to you now or wait until the party comes?"

Mrs. Burton saw Phinny's eager look and knew that neither he nor Cathie would wish to wait until afternoon, and replied, "I think I should like to have your

presents this very minute." Away went both the children to their own rooms and were back in a minute.

"You know I killed a bear," began Phineas, both hands behind him. Mrs. Burton nodded in response. "Mr. Jones said it was mine to keep or to sell, and I sold it to him for this," and Phineas reached out a crisp new twenty-dollar bill toward Mrs. Burton, "and I give it to you," the boy's voice faltered a little, but he had resolved to tell her, "because I like you just the same way that other boys like their mothers."

Catherine's hands were also behind her. "And I made this for you because you are my truly mother," she said, holding toward Mrs. Burton the bead picture prettily framed in twigs of alder.

Mrs. Burton looked at them in astonishment.

"If this don't beat all," she said. "Phineas, I might just as well tell you now that I think just as much of you as I would of a boy of my own, and that you are a sort of relation of mine anyway ; your mother was a Higgins, and her mother was my own cousin."

The children both looked at her in wonder. "And as for your presents, I never had such nice birthday presents before in all my life, nor presents that I shall think as much of," and she held up the little framed

picture and looked at it admiringly. "I shall will this to your little girls," she said to Cathie; "and I shall hang it in the parlor right over the mantel. And your money, my boy," she continued, smiling at Phineas, "I shall try and save for you."

But Phineas shook his head vigorously. "No," he said, "I want you to buy something for yourself with it."

"Well, then I will," agreed Mrs. Burton.

"And am I truly a relation of yours?" asked Phinny anxiously.

"Yes, and what's more, I have adopted you," answered Mrs. Burton. "I have been writing to the asylum about it, and when I went to the village last week I had the papers all ready, yours and Cathie's, and I signed both before Judge King. So you are really my boy now and must call me mother."

"My," said Cathie. "Oh, Phinny, wasn't it lucky we found my mother?"

But Phinny had turned his face toward the wall, and Mrs. Burton could see that the boy was crying. She went toward him, and putting her arm about him kissed him tenderly. "There, don't cry," she said. "I want to tell you about my party. I asked our friends to come so that I could tell them you were

both truly my children, and I meant to have told you both at the same time, but I guess it is better for you to know it first."

"Leander has a present for you too, mother," said Phineas, eager to make his new claim seem real.

"Has he? Well, I must send you children out to get me some fresh raspberries; I want to make Mr. Goddard a raspberry short-cake for his tea, poor man," and with a smile at the children's happy faces Mrs. Burton took Cathie's little picture into the parlor and hung it over the mantel.

CHAPTER XIX

THE BIRTHDAY PARTY

PHINEAS almost forgot about the party in his new happiness. "Is my name 'Burton' now, the same as yours and Cathie's?" he asked eagerly when he brought in the basket heaped high with raspberries.

"Your name is Phineas Trot Burton," replied Mrs. Burton; "but I look to you, Phinny, just as I said when we had our first talk, to do a good deal of your own bringing up. You have done real well so far. I expect Miss Pitts and Mr. Goddard will be surprised at our news. The fact is, Phineas, that I began to be afraid Mr. Goddard would get you away from me," and Mrs. Burton nodded smilingly.

"He didn't want to adopt me, did he?" asked Phineas.

"Well, he began to show symptoms of it," replied Mrs. Burton; "and he told me last week that he wanted to set up a mark in our pasture and teach you to shoot."

Phinny smiled at this. "You wouldn't want me to do that, would you, mother?" he replied.

“Well, I don’t know as I shall object now if the minister speaks of it again. I hear he is a real good shot, and all I ask is to see you grow up as good a man as Mr. Goddard.”

Phinny’s face brightened. “He can take pictures, too,” said the boy. “He showed me some fine pictures of cows, and of birds, and of trees and all kinds of places.”

“Did he? Well, poor man, I expect he would have enjoyed having a nice boy like you, Phineas; but you see your mother being a Higgins gave me the first claim, and Mr. Goddard will always take an interest in you.”

Early that afternoon Cathie, in a new pink muslin dress, and Princess with a blue ribbon around her neck, were sitting on the front steps waiting, as Cathie said, for the party to come. Phineas in his new clothes with his hair neatly brushed, was standing at the side door looking across the fields in the direction from which Leander would come.

“I wish I knew what his present is,” Phineas thought. “He said that even his mother and father didn’t know about it.”

Mrs. Burton, in her gray muslin with her best lace collar, was looking about the parlor to see that every-

thing was in order. The parlor was a large room, and was seldom opened. Mrs. Burton always declared that no one in the village had a better furnished parlor than she had ; but she found the sitting-room more comfortable for every-day living. She had just put the children's adoption papers on the marble-topped centre-table when she heard steps on the path and heard Mr. and Mrs. Jones speaking to Cathie. She hurried to the door to welcome them.

"Where is Leander?" she asked.

"Oh, he is coming across the fields," answered Mrs. Jones with a little laugh. "He has a birthday present for you, Mrs. Burton, but it is such a secret that even his father and I cannot imagine what it is," and Mrs. Jones set down a good-sized package on the table. "That is a little remembrance from Mr. Jones and me," she concluded ; "and there isn't a bit of a mystery about our present. I'll tell you what it is right now. It is ——"

"Oh, Mrs. Jones!" exclaimed Cathie, "please wait for the rest of the party, and then my mother can have all her s'prises at once."

"I guess that would be the better way," agreed Mrs. Jones, looking at Cathie kindly. "Now I wonder why you stopped here last May," she continued. "I

should like to have a little girl just like you. Now if you had only kept on a little way and had stopped at my house why perhaps you would have been my little girl."

Cathie smiled back happily. "But you wouldn't have wanted Phinny," she said.

"She was set on having Phineas adopted from the moment she came into this house," explained Mrs. Burton.

"I hear Mr. Goddard is thinking of adopting him," said Mrs. Jones.

"Oh, he can't. Phinny is——" and then Cathie remembered, and put her hand tight over her mouth and ran back to the front door to watch for the rest of the party. As she sat there looking down the road she saw a man coming slowly along leading a red and white cow.

"There comes my mother's birthday present," she whispered to Princess.

The man stopped in front of the house.

"Will you take this letter in to Mrs. Burton?" he asked, holding out an envelope toward Cathie; "and ask her if she will please step to the door and tell me where to put the cow."

"Yes, sir," said Cathie, and ran down the path

and took the letter and carried it in to Mrs. Burton.

Mrs. Burton opened the note and read it. "My soul!" she exclaimed, "if this don't beat all," and she hurried down the path to speak to the man.

"Mr. Goddard has sent my mother a cow for a birthday present," Cathie explained to Mrs. Jones; and Mrs. Jones hurried after Mrs. Burton to look at and admire the red and white Jersey.

The door of the little barn was wide open, and a nice stall was all ready.

"I believe you children knew about it," said Mrs. Burton, as the man showed Phinny how to tie the cow in the stall.

"I'll come over and teach you to milk, Phineas," said Mr. Jones.

"I seem to have everything I want," said Mrs. Burton as they went back to the house; "but Mr Goddard is most too generous to me."

Soon after this Miss Pitts and Mr. Goddard arrived, and Miss Pitts carried the birthday cake into the pleasant kitchen, where Mrs. Burton had set her tea-table with her best damask cloth and her best pink china. Then Mrs. Jones was allowed to open the package and show Mrs. Burton a dozen

glass goblets, which Mrs. Burton was greatly pleased with.

"Now the party is all here except Leander," said Cathie, and just then a strange noise was heard at the side door and Phineas ran out to see what it was.

"Oh, mother, come quick," he called, and all the "party" hurried to the side door. There stood Leander and Phineas beaming with smiles, and between them stood a half-grown collie dog.

"I brought you this nice dog for a present, Mrs. Burton," said Leander. "A man I know wanted a good home for him, and I remembered that you didn't have any dog, so I knew you'd be glad to have him."

"Oh, Phinny, isn't it lovely to have a dog!" exclaimed Cathie, reaching out to rub the puppy's smooth head. "What is his name, Leander?"

"His name is 'Mike,'" said Leander. "It isn't a very pretty name, but he is a fine dog." Phinny had knelt down beside the dog, and was smoothing it and talking to it; the older members of the party stood silent.

"Leander!" said his mother reprovingly, "you ought to have spoken to me about this; perhaps Mrs. Burton doesn't want a dog!"

“Oh, yes, she does, don’t you, mother?” said Cathie. “We’ve got a cat and a cow and I think it’s real lucky Leander happened to think of a dog, don’t you, mother?”

Mrs. Burton looked at Phinny’s happy face, and then noticed Leander’s anxious look.

“Of course I want a nice dog like that,” she said heartily; “and I’m much obliged to you, Leander. Now Phinny, can’t you find a place for ‘Mike’ in the shed, and we will have a cup of tea and a piece of my birthday cake.”

While Phinny and Leander were trying to persuade “Mike” to forget that he was homesick, Mrs. Burton led her friends back to the parlor and, taking the adoption papers from the table, handed them to Mr. Goddard.

“I wanted to tell you,” she said, looking at her friends with a happy smile, “that Phineas is a relative of mine; Mr. Goddard discovered that for me; and beside that I love the boy dearly, and I have legally adopted him and given him my name. Those papers, Mr. Goddard, will show that now I have two children, Catherine and Phineas.”

“And you forget that you are going to take me too,” said Miss Pitts.

"No, indeed, Eliza, but I have got to wait for another spring before I can count on you."

"Well, you will have quite a family, Mrs. Burton," said Mr. Goddard. "I wish I might be a member of it. I am going to rent my house for the winter; couldn't you find a corner for me?"

"Why, he could have your spare-room until spring, couldn't he?" suggested Miss Pitts. "And you could let him have your parlor for a study."

"I guess Mr. Goddard doesn't mean it," said Mrs. Burton.

"Indeed I do," replied the minister. "I'll come next week if you'll let me."

Mrs. Burton laughed heartily. "Did you ever see the beat?" she asked. "Here last April I was all alone. Then Cathie and Phineas walked in and decided to stay, then Eliza thought I would need her. Mr. Goddard says he wanted a home for his cow and sent it over; Leander wanted a home for Mike; and now here is the minister himself wanting to be one of my family. Here comes my son," she added, as Phineas and Leander appeared in the doorway. "I shall have to see what he says about it. Phinny, Mr. Goddard wants to come and live with us; what do you think about having him?"

"Gee," said Phinny, smiling at the minister, "I think it would be great ; will you come to-morrow, sir?"

"My son seems to approve," laughed Mrs. Burton.

Then the birthday cake was cut, and Cathie and Phineas, with Mrs. Burton sitting between them, smiled across the table toward the pleasant faces of Miss Pitts and Mr. Goddard.

"Well, Cathie," said the minister, "do you want me to adopt Phinny now?"

Cathie shook her head. "He's really and truly 'dopted now, isn't he, mother?"

"Yes, really and truly," replied Mrs. Burton.

THE END



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